

A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER ROUTES OF A  
GROUP OF INDIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE DURBAN AREA:  
THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

by

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## ABSTRACT

This longitudinal study on the transition from school to work of a group of Indian school-leavers from two co-educational schools in Durban is an attempt to analyse the processes underlying the construction of educational and career routes. It deals with the lived experiences of boys and girls from different social-class backgrounds within the school, the family, and the work situation. This passage from school to work, which also includes the experiences of unemployment, is examined against the background of social interactions in micro settings, as well as the influences of social, structural and cultural forces. In particular, the career pathways are studied within the context of the cultural background of Indians, and their socio-historical location in the South African society as a minority and an intermediate status group in a racially-divided society.

As the students proceeded through the last three years at school and into the first few months of work various qualitative, field research methods were used to get some insight into the changing and complex nature of the transitional process. These methods included participant observation, focussed and unfocussed interviews, and discussions. Such qualitative research methods were valuable for an understanding of the meanings and values on which the students' actions were based.

The structural and interpretive analysis of the family, the school, the labour market, and a patriarchal, capitalist, apartheid society points to the significance of ideological values,

hegemony, class relations, racial, gender, and political and economic influences on the construction of educational and career identities. The analysis also indicates the close relationship which exists on the one hand between the cultural interpretations and practices of various social actors; and on the other hand, the structural conditions in which these are located. The findings provide some account of how social-class relations are continued and sustained via related and different inequalities such as race and gender. Race, class and gender exist side by side in this reproduction process. By focussing on the close relationship which exists between the actions and decisions of the students, and the structures of society, this study attempts to bridge the gap between structural and interpretive explanations. The students' interpretations of their educational and career choices are brought into a closer relationship with the structures of society.

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S.A. NAICKER

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work,  
and has not been submitted previously for a degree in any other  
university.

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## PART ONE

### THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This is an interpretive, qualitative study<sup>1(p. 16)</sup> of the processes underlying the social construction of the educational and career routes of a group of Indian students in two co-educational, secondary schools in Durban. It is a study of the transition from school to adult life, which is concerned mainly with the students' choices, decisions and actions related to their occupational and social destinations. The study deals with socialisation and change within the school, the family and places of employment in the way these processes are experienced and dealt with by the students, their parents, teachers and employers. It also takes into account the experiences of those students who are unemployed. This passage from school to adult life is discussed in terms of the emergent nature of social interaction, as well as the playing out of social, structural and cultural forces in choosing a career.

#### 1.2 THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

The study of career and educational routes is essentially a study of the lives of young school-leavers who are in search of employment. It may also include those who experience unemployment. Of those who enter employment, some take up semi-skilled or unskilled work; while others seek apprenticeships or training courses. Full-time students in tertiary education<sup>2(p. 16)</sup> usually embark on the long road to careers in some of the more prestigious professions; while those who are unemployed struggle to meet the many difficulties in having to find work.

This transition from school, and the entry into employment should be seen as part of a longer period in the life of a student, since it is closely connected with the development of expectations and aspirations about their future. It also extends well into their first years at work, and involves their



adjustment to new situations. The study of educational and career routes therefore concerns the transitional years of young individuals proceeding through the series of stages and decisions that will have important implications for their ultimate mobility in society.

This passage from school to work involves a complexity of factors, among which are the informal influences of the home environment, the experiences of schooling, and the search for employment. Until quite recently the process of leaving school and entering the world of work and tertiary education has not been seriously researched.<sup>3</sup>(p. 16) However, some recent developments in several western countries have led to increased research activity on the transitional process. Some of these developments in the political, educational and economic spheres have included higher youth unemployment, government intervention in industrial training, and the raising of the school-leaving age. In Britain, studies such as those of Veness (1962), Carter (1962; 1966), Maizels (1970), Roberts (1972), Swift (1973), Williams (1974), Brannen (1975), Ashton and Field (1976), Weir and Nolan (1977), Willis (1977), Deem (1980b), Sawdon (1981), Rees and Atkinson (1982), Gothard (1982), Gleeson (1983), Jenkins (1983), West and Newton (1983), and Ryrie (1983), are some examples of research undertaken in this field.<sup>4</sup>(p. 16)

This concern over transitional education is reflected not only in research studies, but also by those organisations which have an interest in industrial welfare. For example, the **Youth Employment Service** in Britain whose job is to aid young people in this transition gives valuable support to such research studies.<sup>5</sup>(p. 16) In several western countries, the welfare of young workers and graduates has captured the interest of economic planners in the cause of a more efficient use of manpower. The **Department of Education and Science**, the **Manpower Services Commission**, and various university centres in the U.K.,<sup>6</sup>(p. 16) and the **OECD Secretariat of UNESCO** are some well known examples of institutions closely involved with work on transitional education. One of the most active institutions

in this field is the **National Clearinghouse On Transition From School**<sup>7</sup>(p. 17) at the University of Tasmania. This unit was previously attached to the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University.

### 1.3 FROM SCHOOL INTO UNEMPLOYMENT

The study of young school-leavers at work cannot be isolated from the experiences of the unemployed and their search for jobs. In this respect, studies on the transition from school into work in the 1980s differ greatly from the earlier studies of the 1960s and 70s. The relatively stable economic conditions in the 60s and 70s meant that the transition from school to work was a much easier process. In contrast, the very real threat of unemployment is a constant worry to school-leavers in the 1980s. Newspaper reports on unemployment among school-leavers in South Africa appeared frequently during the period that this study was conducted. For example, the following extract on the subject of teenage unemployment illustrates the situation:

"Many young people of all races who were cock-a-hoop when they jumped the matric hurdle in December last year are still walking the streets looking for work.

"At the time they need the widest choice of job opportunities, the people with no work experience are being squeezed out of the bottom of the jobs market. And with some employers reporting more than 1000 applicants for a single junior position the chances of finding any work remain poor.

"Others have taken temporary refuge in short courses, swelling the intakes of colleges and technikons in the hope the inhospitable jobs climate will improve." <sup>8</sup>(p. 17)

From this it is evident that unemployment among young people is particularly high, and highest of all among those who, not having succeeded at school, leave ill-equipped. The transition to unemployment is really from dependence in school into a harsh and competitive world where the unemployed have to learn to be self reliant, and when the opportunity arises to be ready

to take on jobs which they would not consider in a more favourable economic climate. In times of high unemployment many who have the appropriate qualifications cannot find jobs to match their qualifications. Their expectations are thwarted and they are forced to take relatively low-level jobs.

It is well-known that the rate of unemployment is high amongst the socially disadvantaged groups. This is because labour markets tend to discriminate against those with few skills, limited experience and little training. Some other factors which account for the recent increase in youth unemployment include the rising levels of general unemployment, changing patterns of participation in the workforce and a decline in the demand for unskilled labour.

#### 1.4 WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY AND LIFE CHANCES

Various research studies have stressed that the transition from school to work should be seen in the context of the wider society. Carter (1966:11), for example, points out that inequalities between various groups of pupils exist not only in school, but are also perpetuated and reinforced as school-leavers enter the world of work. Such inequalities are known to have lasting effects on the quality of life that these people will lead. It has also been shown that those who suffer most are the children who find themselves in the lower streams or grades of the secondary school.<sup>9</sup>(p. 17) Many of them usually leave school early and find their way into semi-skilled and unskilled employment.

This concern with educational opportunity and life chances, especially in studies of social disadvantage in the early 1970s in Britain and elsewhere also led researchers in this field to stress the fact that schools were not catering adequately for their students. They pointed to inadequacies in curricula, teaching styles and assessment procedures that catered for the minority-students from the better educated and more affluent families. They generally benefitted by the emphasis on academic

studies and were successful in examinations leading to tertiary entrance. On the other hand, many of those who came from socially disadvantaged homes seemed to find school a negative and irrelevant experience, which often intensified their social disadvantage. Some of the better-known British studies which focussed on the theme of social class, educational opportunity, and social disadvantage include those of Floud, Halsey and Martin (1956), Douglas (1964), Cullen (1969), Miller (1971), Midwinter (1972), Jackson and Marsden (1962), and Craft (1974). Notable government reports which also stress this theme are the **Plowden Committee** (Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education, England, 1967) and Coleman *et al.* (1966) in the U.S.A.

When the transitional process is seen in this light it may explain how and why education and schools in particular channel youngsters into different directions in life. Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963), for example, in their study of an American high school illustrate how the organisational procedures such as the counselling service tend to control the students' access to higher educational facilities, and in turn their chances in life. Likewise, in the present study, it became necessary to see how educational provision in Indian schools provided access to higher educational facilities and jobs in the South African society.<sup>10(p. 17)</sup>

## 1.5 THE PRESENT STUDY

### 1.5.1 The Focus of this Study

Against this background, one of the main concerns of the present study is with those aspects of the transitional years which represent a process in which a selected group of students enter paid employment. These school-leavers are differentiated into certain occupations which are roughly in accordance with the demand for their skilled labour. For many, this may simply mean the entry into unskilled and semi-skilled work and the end to any formal education.

The process of the transition from school to work involves

an analysis of the ways in which the students' job aspirations are formulated, especially through the influences of the home, social background, and through the influence of the school, in particular its career-counselling service. It also involves an account of how these school-leavers find jobs; as well as a discussion of their reactions to the world of work.

The central themes here are those of continuity and discontinuity between education and work. The institutions of education, the family and the peer group often operate in a continuous way so as to develop an individual's self perspective. This makes it possible for many young people in the labour market to have reliable expectations of work. However, since this is not always easily achieved by all school-leavers, this study also focuses on those social processes which may explain the discontinuity between education and the world of work.

Educational and career choices of the students are seen as a set of routes or pathways which may, in certain cases be regarded as escalators to certain occupations. The present study, therefore, describes and explains the processes underlying some of the changes which occur in the construction of such routes or pathways; and this is closely connected with the students' interactions and negotiations with their parents, teachers, guidance counsellors, and employers in job situations. These are closely examined in terms of the cultural backgrounds of the students, their assimilation, integration, accommodation; and even with restatements of the many definitions of reality confronting them at home, in school, and in the wider society.

The interest in the social and cultural forces through which choices and decisions are played out raises some important questions concerning the transition which students have to make from school to work, or unemployment. For example:

- (a) How important is this transition from the young person's point of view?

- (b) How does he see it, and act in terms of it?
- (c) To what extent is he prepared for it?
- (d) Does the change merely happen to him, or does he have any part to play in shaping the process of change?
- (e) How far is he looking ahead when he decides to take on a job, or enter tertiary education?

These, along with several other questions which are raised in this study may be regarded as only a small part of the transition process.

#### 1.5.2 The Use of the Qualitative and Interpretive Research Paradigm

One of the ways of attempting to answer some of these questions is by adopting the interpretive and qualitative research approach. Following Silverman's (1970) formulation, the question being asked is: "What is going on here?" The reason for using this approach instead of the traditional, quantitative, positivistic survey type of study is to reject prescription in favour of analysis. Initially, the task of this is to describe and understand something about the social systems of the school, the family, and employment in terms of the way the people themselves interpret their own situations. However, analytically, this study is also concerned with the task of placing the perceptions and interactions of teachers, students, parents, employers and other related persons within the wider social context, and does not rest solely upon the interpretation of what people say.

Qualitative, interpretive, field research methods are used to explore some of the cultural processes underlying the career and educational routes taken by the students. Cultural processes are emphasised so as to capture the students' sensitivity to meanings and values, and to interpret some of their actions. Culture is not seen simply as the transfer of a set of values and ideas from one generation to another, as is implied in certain popular notions of socialisation: but as a feature of collective human action which reveals struggle, resistance and having to contend with contradictions.

### 1.5.3 The Design of the Project

Although the design of this project is described and explained in detail in Part Two, it is necessary to give a brief account at this stage. The fieldwork was conducted between 1981 to 1984 with a group of Indian secondary school students in Durban. It is an attempt to investigate a variety of ways of looking at the transition from school to adult life, by examining the students' experiences at critical points in the transition period.

The findings centre mainly around the experiences of a group of school-leavers who are made up of those who managed to get employment, those who were sub-employed, and those in domesticity. The study also analyses the experiences of those who were unemployed, and of students who entered tertiary education. However, it must be stressed that this latter group did not constitute the main focus of attention. It merely provided a basis for comparison along the lines of class, family, gender, ability and choice of careers. Initially, about forty students were chosen from two co-educational secondary schools. The sample consisted of students of varying levels of abilities and of different social backgrounds from one ordinary and one practical grade class in each of the two schools.

One of these schools, referred to under the fictitious name of **Ridgemount Secondary** is situated in an established township area created for Indians by the Group Areas Act of 1950.<sup>11</sup> (p. 17) The other, called **Orchard Lane Secondary** is situated in an old, established suburban area that was a predominantly Indian area even before the Group Areas legislation came into effect. These schools were chosen because the areas which they serve are typical of both the established patterns of life, and some of the new, emerging social conditions in the Indian community of Durban. The population in both neighbourhoods include a typical representation of people from many sectors of the Indian community and this is quite apparent in the schools chosen.

Contact was established with the different groups of students in January 1981, at the beginning of their second year in secondary school. They were followed right through the last three years they spent in school, from standards eight to ten. After that they were studied during selected periods in the year immediately after leaving school, entering employment, or as unemployed. The fieldwork continued until August 1984.

While they were in school, all the groups in the four classes were studied intensively by means of observations which focussed mainly on the career and general guidance lessons, and individual counselling sessions. Some general lessons across the curriculum were also observed to get some idea of the cultural atmosphere of the classrooms in which the students experienced their formal education. In addition to this, the homes of all the students were visited, and lengthy taped conversations were held with parents and some other adults who played important roles in their lives and who lived with these families. Regular, taped conversations were also held: with the different groups under study; the principals of the two schools; the guidance counsellors and guidance teachers; and all other teachers who came into contact with members of these groups. The individual students were also regularly interviewed during the four years of study, at school and at home.

Those in employment were visited at their places of work on at least four occasions and observed in the work situation. Taped conversations were also held with managers, supervisors, foremen and other persons under whose control they were placed. The school-leavers were interviewed on their work experiences, and on their passage from school to work.

Regular contact was maintained with those who were unemployed, those in domesticity, and those who entered tertiary education. It was not always easy to establish contact since on more than one occasion, some students had moved home. Nevertheless, every effort was made to keep track of all members in the sample till the completion of the fieldwork.



#### 1.5.4 Race, Class, Gender and Life-Styles

Race, class, gender and the reproduction of life-styles are other important considerations in this study. These social divisions are examined against the background of the actions of the students themselves, the practices of their parents, teachers, counsellors, and employers; and also against the structure of the family, school, the labour market and the wider society. The race, class and gender divisions of society are maintained and upheld, both through cultural practices, as well as structural constraints.

Social-class differences are apparent in the way students from the lower-working-class and middle-class backgrounds, for example, construct their respective career identities. Gender statuses are produced and reproduced in family, school and work settings. Some account is also given of how the overall position of Indians as a minority group in a racially-divided society is maintained. From this, we get some idea of how the racial code of an apartheid society is reproduced. The overall analysis shows how race, class and gender exist side by side in this reproduction process.

The relationship between race, class and culture is revealed through the use of the cultural perspective. This approach indicates how school-leavers from a lower social class and from a disadvantaged, minority race group are involved in the unequal fight to produce meanings and their own cultural forms in the face of the wider, dominant society. By their own examples of choosing, deciding and acting on career choices, they show how even the oppressed, subordinate or minority groups can construct their own vibrant culture, rather than be completely at the mercy of a social system which seems to weigh heavily against them. As the youngsters move towards their occupational destinations, it is possible to observe how certain problems relevant to their choices and actions are lived through to particular outcomes. It is in the home, school, and places of work, where direct experience, ways of living, and creative acts define and re-define problems, that new meanings are created.

For an understanding of the reality of the occupational and educational destinations of Indian students in South Africa, and of the complex situations in which this reality is embedded, a study of this kind is important. Compared with the class structure of Britain, U.S.A. and Australia where transitional studies have been conducted, South Africa with its unique pattern of race stratification and its resulting wide differences of employment opportunities provides a useful setting for a study of this kind. One of the important contributions it can make is to explain how the career choices of students from a minority race group may be explained in cultural and motivational terms. This is why this study focuses so closely on the cultural background of Indians, their socio-historical location in the South African society, and the economic and political influences on contemporary Indian life.

#### 1.5.5 Theoretical Considerations

The attempt to produce a theory about the transition from school to work involved an examination of the relationship between personal identity on the one hand, and social structure on the other. The micro and macro aspects were also related to each other, and the processes leading to the production and reproduction of culture were also scrutinised. Loosely described, the theory advanced in this study may be classified as belonging to the cultural production and reproduction of social divisions in society. It shows how the transition from school to work is closely tied up with the beliefs and practices of various social actors, and the structural conditions in which these are located. The autonomy of the school-leavers is examined against the structural constraints of the family, school, the labour market, and a patriarchal, capitalist and apartheid society.

This study emphasises how the construction of the students' educational and career identities depends upon the positions which different groups occupy in the social structure. Factors such as class, race and gender point to the fact that different individuals experience the world in significantly different

ways. Ashton (1974:171), for example refers to this pattern of experience as a frame of reference. He says that "the transmission of frames of reference starts within the family, but the differences that can be observed in both the style and the content of what is transmitted are seen as a product of the position which the family occupies within the overall class structure."

The educational and career identities of the school-leavers in the present study are analysed by a careful examination of their various frames of reference and how they act in terms of these. In doing so, relationships are also established between the separate areas of home, school, work, and the wider society. By looking at how certain frames of reference are acquired and developed, and how students act in various situations one can attempt to examine changes which occur at various points in the transition period from school to adult life. Veness (1962:2) discusses such changes in the adolescent's choices and decisions about jobs, and says it is often necessary for the young person "... to direct his thoughts both behind and ahead of the present moment; swinging rapidly from one perspective to another, comparing, predicting, regretting and resolving afresh; planning for the future but preserving continuity with the present;..."

This movement from school to work, and the production and reproduction of culture is a complex process. For example, in the present study the decisions and choices of the school-leavers from the different social classes are not simply determined by outside structures, but are a product of cultural relationships. Much of this can be attributed to the meanings and perceptions of particular individuals, as well as to the dominant ideologies of the school, the labour market and the wider society.

Despite the constraints of unemployment, racially separate education, and life in an apartheid society, the way in which the students constructed their realities is an important aspect of the interpretation offered in this study about the transitional process. By paying attention to features such as the culture

of a minority, dominated group the study also points out how different forms of acceptance, rejection, contradictions and accommodation form the basis of educational and career pathways. The cultural expression of the students and their families, rather than the direct imposition of the dominant ideology, lies at the heart of the reproduction process.

The interpretation of the reproduction process stresses an active rather than a passive notion of culture. Such an account also attempts to bridge the gap between structure and identity by focussing on the close relationship which exists between the actions and decisions of the students, and the structures of society. The students' activities are examined in the context of particular social and economic structures which not only influence their actions, but are in turn affected by them. Structures are constituted through action, and the production and reproduction processes are based on everyday transactions.

Explanations such as the foregoing necessitated the use of interpretive theories in combination with neo-Marxist cultural analysis. This approach offers a deep understanding of how structure conditions interaction which in turn modifies it. The findings of this study point to ways in which the wider society is brought into contact with the actor's definition of the situation. This offers scope for advancing both structural and interpretive explanations of the transitional process.

#### 1.5.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into two parts which are closely related. Part One, which consists of seven chapters, explores certain paradigms, theories, published research, and concepts related to the transition from school to work, and to unemployment. These are also discussed with specific reference to the needs of the present study. Wherever relevant, the position of Indians in the South African society is also discussed so as to focus on the importance of this topic for an understanding of the mobility and life chances of Indians as a dominated, minority

group. By structuring the discussion along these lines, this section offers brief glimpses into some of the main findings which are discussed in greater detail in Part Two. It was necessary to organise Part One in this way so that the empirical data analysed in Part Two can be studied against a background of current research already undertaken in this field. Part One sets the present study in context.

Part Two which consists of eight chapters and two appendices, gives a detailed account of the design of the study, its methodology, and its findings. It constitutes the greater part of the written report. The close relationship between the two parts of this thesis is borne out in the summary and recommendations contained in the final chapter. The findings of this study are compared with those of similar studies already conducted in this field. An attempt is also made to locate the place of the present study in relation to these other studies. Some indication has been given of the possible contribution which this study can make to existing work done in this field.

This study also offers some practical suggestions for a better understanding of the experiences of youth as they make the journey from school to work. Finally, there are some indications of how structural and interpretive explanations are brought together in the theory which has been developed.

#### 1.6 SOME LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

By attempting to deal with different aspects of the transitional process in a single project, this study may appear too ambitious. Thus far, the transition from school to work, and the transition into unemployment have already been dealt with in previous studies as separate issues. Because of the enormous task involved in actual observations in a variety of field settings, and in maintaining regular contact with the sample over a four-year period, it was impossible for one person to investigate the whole of the transition period. This study is therefore largely concerned with the beginning of the transition: that is, with the experiences of the youngsters during their last three years

at school, and the first year after leaving school - the period during which, for most young people, school turns fairly sharply into work, or unemployment.

An exercise of this nature and scale is so vast that, while every effort is made to present the findings as accurately as possible, an unavoidable limitation will be a measure of distortion. The reality of the construction of career and educational routes is so varied that it is far too complex and multifaceted to be captured fully in a single study. All that can be offered is an approximation to that reality. The conceptual and methodological mechanisms of sociology and education are generally relatively crude and inexact for exploring the whole of any kind of reality. Even though much of the data were gathered through first-hand observations, a fair amount had to be collected and analysed through second-order constructs and categories. One of the problems in using this approach is that it can simplify some of the actual interpretations, perspectives and meanings held by teachers, students, parents and employers. It should also be noted that an account based on the experiences of a single researcher will inevitably involve some of the many problems of selection, chance and bias.

Despite these limitations, this study is an attempt at presenting a historical snapshot of the process of constructing career and educational routes of a group of young students. Such studies are virtually non-existent in South Africa, and qualitative researches in education are rare.<sup>12(p. 18)</sup>

### NOTES

1. The **interpretive, qualitative** research style adopted in this study is concerned with **understanding** how students experience the worlds of school, work, and unemployment in the construction of their career identities. The main concern is with the actors' frames of references and their experiences. This is different from the **quantitative, positivistic** research style which usually characterises the large-scale, survey type studies in which **facts** and **causes** are sought through methods such as survey questionnaires, structured interviews, inventories and demographic analysis. The quantitative data which are produced are used to prove statistically the relationships between operationally defined variables.
2. **Tertiary education** in this study refers to higher education offered at university, college of education and technikon.
3. Weir and Nolan (1977:2) say that until recently research in this area was sparse and largely confined to the U.S.A., where it focussed mainly on the importance of parental social status, neighbourhood and race. Earlier British research such as that of Ford (1969) was concerned mainly with the relationship between job choice and secondary school attended. Others, like Fraser (1959) focussed mainly on the relationship between home background factors and school performance.
4. A discussion of relevant aspects of some of these studies is included in the chapters of Part One, dealing with the theoretical and research literature in this field.
5. Another example of such an organisation is the **Research Administration of the Department of Employment** in London; which publishes papers regularly on topics such as youth unemployment, higher education and the employment of graduates, mobility within local labour markets, and school-leavers and the search for work.
6. One such centre is the University of Leicester's **Young Adults in the Labour Market Project**.

7. **The National Clearinghouse on Transition From School** was established with funds made available by the Australian Government's Commonwealth Transition Education Programme.
8. "Job squeeze hits the matrices," **The Sunday Tribune**, April 3, 1983.
9. The present study includes students from both the **ordinary** and **practical grade** classes in Indian secondary schools. The ordinary grade prepares students for the Senior Certificate Examination, including Matriculation Exemption, that being the entrance requirement for tertiary education. The practical grade is generally concerned with preparing students for entry into lower-level jobs in the occupational structure. By the beginning of 1983, the system of selecting students for the practical grade was abolished. A new system catering for subjects to be taken on the higher, standard and lower grades was introduced for all students between standards seven and nine. However, the practical grade students who were already in standard ten were allowed to take their final examinations on this grade for the last time in 1983. This meant that the new system of differentiation did not affect the students for the purposes of this study.
10. The demand for equal educational opportunity and the scrapping of job reservation for the different race groups has been consistently voiced by prominent leaders in the Indian community; and has been frequently discussed by organisations such as the **Teachers' Association of South Africa**. Some of its annual conference themes in recent years were: education for equal opportunity in 1973; education for an open society in 1980; and education for a post-apartheid society in 1987.
11. **The Group Areas Act**, introduced in 1950, gave legal force to the whole of South Africa becoming an area in which inter-racial transfers of land and immovable property are controlled. Hence, there are separate housing and trading zones for each of the four racial groups.



12. Penny (1979), in his study of first year students' experience of academic life at the University of Fort Hare, makes some use of the qualitative research approach. Sociological studies such as those of Molteno (1983), Simon (1984), and Graaf (1987), which examine certain educational issues also use qualitative research techniques.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter sets out to outline and examine some of the dilemmas which are present in building a theoretical framework for this study, especially in the attempt to explain the social processes<sup>1</sup>(p. 34) which underly the transition from school to work. It is important to clarify the theoretical framework on which a study of the social process of educational and career choices can rest, since this ultimately reflects fundamental beliefs about the models of man and of society on which the study rests. For example, the theoretical assumptions that one makes about the nature of social reality, knowledge, and human nature leads to the adoption of certain appropriate research strategies (Cuff and Payne, 1979:181).

The notions of **social reality**, **knowledge**, and the **nature of man** are evident in various parts of this study, and this raises both ontological and epistemological questions which have direct implications for the research methodology. These have certain important consequences for the way in which research is designed, how the data are collected, analysed, and the conclusions arrived at. Different ontologies, epistemologies and models of man favour different methodologies.

These are some of the issues which become relevant in a study such as this, when discussing the people and knowledge processing aspects in the social construction of educational and career pathways. Since much of the focus in this study is on both structural issues, as well as the subjective experiences of individual students, the ontological and epistemological assumptions cannot be exclusively deterministic, nor totally voluntaristic. To rely solely on deterministic explanations would mean subscribing to a hard, external, objective view of the social world which treats the nature of the transitional process as unproblematic. On the other hand, a totally voluntaristic view would mean stressing the importance of the subjective experience of individuals to the exclusion of structural in-

fluences. If we are to generate an account of social reality that adequately comprehends the shared life-worlds of the students, which situates their discourses and practices within their wider social contexts then it is necessary to incorporate elements of both determinism, as well as voluntarism.

The discussion which follows, on symbolic interactionism, sociological phenomenology, Marxist cultural studies, and the reflexive nature of qualitative research gives some indication of the reasons for this preference. An adequate theoretical framework is necessary:

- (a) to conceptualise the process of occupational choice by using both deterministic, as well as non-deterministic explanations;
- (b) to explain the notion of the cultural production of meanings- an important aspect of the process of career and educational choices;
- (c) to explain the relationship between personal identity and social structure in this process.

These are important aspects of the study of the transition from school to work within an interpretive perspective.

## 2.1 EXPLAINING OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

Another aspect which needs clarification at this stage is the theoretical basis on which the notion of **occupational choice** rests. It is important to do so since frequent reference is made throughout this study to the concept of occupational choice. Quite clearly, the processes underlying the educational and career decisions made by the students in this study should not be confused with the goal-oriented career choices as proposed by the developmental theories of Super (1957) and others.<sup>2</sup> (p. 34) These theories which are widely accepted by careers guidance counsellors in the U.S.A., Britain and South Africa (Hayes and Hopson, 1971; Jackson, 1973) are unsuitable for a study of this kind. These developmental theorists explain occupational choice as if it is a hard, external objective kind of reality which is similar for most individuals. By taking the individual as the most convenient unit for study, they fail to give an

adequate explanation of social processes and institutional forces underlying the individual's career choices.

By underplaying the role of the social, the developmental theorists imply that people enter occupations after careful and systematic consideration of all the alternatives open to them. This explanation of occupational choice is an exaggerated one since personal preference in choosing careers is seldom conducted in such a straightforward, systematic, and objective way. When people are faced with alternatives in making choices, other factors such as external social influences, and the cultural environment in which they are located, as well as their struggle to come to terms with the options available to them, must also account for the way in which they are channelled towards one occupational stream or another.

When compared with the developmental theories, the explanations of Blau *et al.* (1956) and Roberts (1975) seem to be more comprehensive for conceptualising the process of occupational choice. Blau, for example, complements the psychologically-centred theories of Ginsberg, Super and others with relevant economic and sociological explanations. Roberts argues that for many school-leavers in Britain, personal preference of jobs must be seen in the light of the opportunity structure. He maintains that to predict the type of job that an individual will enter, it is more important to know about local job opportunities, and the individual's educational qualifications than to know about the developmental stages through which occupational aims are built up.

## 2.2 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Instead of the fragmentary approach of the developmental theorists who segment occupational aims into distinct stages, the explanation of occupational choice as proposed by Roberts fits in with the needs of the present study. For this purpose, the study also requires a research paradigm which offers an interpretive, cultural understanding of the process of occupational choice. The qualitative, research paradigm provides the opportunity for this kind of complex interpretation, allowing for

both personal and structural issues to be taken into account. Through the use of such strategies as participant observation, and in-depth interviewing, this research style allows for a first-hand knowledge about the empirical social world being studied. It is possible, therefore, through qualitative methodology to get close to the data, thus allowing the data themselves to produce certain levels of explanation, instead of the researcher imposing his own categories of meanings on what is observed (Filstead, 1970:6; Lofland, 1971:3-6).

Because this paradigm allows the researcher to gain access to the life-worlds of other individuals, to discover their daily activities, their motives and meanings, their actions and reactions, it is preferred to the quantitative research style whose main concern is to establish particular ways of discovering and verifying things usually identified as **positivist science**.<sup>3</sup>(p. 34) This study is concerned with explaining the cultural perspectives of students, rather than measuring such phenomena and establishing causal relations between them. The qualitative research paradigm is therefore more valuable for explaining how these people construct their lines of action over periods of time, and also how they are able to sustain and change their social worlds.

Another reason for adopting this approach in the present study is that the strategy and direction of qualitative studies can be changed quite easily to match the changing demands of what is required by the process of observation and analysis. Schatzman and Strauss (1973:7), for example, say that the field of investigation must be seen in creative and emergent terms. The field is neither fixed, nor finite, nor independent of re-definition. Therefore, the processes which have to be explained do not need to be located, measured, and rendered conclusive as **findings** - which is the usual insistence of the quantitative, positivistic paradigm.

By opting for the qualitative approach, the present study joins a growing line of sociological enquiry into the educational

and occupational systems through an intensive investigation of small groups of people in a few selected settings. Though this tradition has not been widely used in South Africa,<sup>4(p. 35)</sup> it is already well established in Britain, and is theoretically and methodologically well grounded. It can be traced to the **Manchester School** of the 1950s and 60s, and the work of Max Gluckman, Ron Frankenburg and Tom Lupton on shop floor ethnographies (Ball, 1981:XVI). In America, it can be traced to the **Chicago School** of the 1930s<sup>5(p. 35)</sup> and the work of Robert Park, and ultimately to Weber's **verstehen**<sup>6(p. 35)</sup> sociology.

More specifically, the theoretical and methodological roots of the present study are to be found in the studies of Lacey (1970), Hargreaves (1967) and Lambart (1976), which were undertaken within a sociological and anthropological framework and had strong ethnographic tendencies.<sup>7(p. 35)</sup> Other studies which have since appeared in Britain, and whose theoretical frameworks are similar to that of the present study are: those of Sharp and Green (1975) on progressive education in a primary school; Nash (1973) on the influence of teachers' expectations on the performance of pupils in the classroom; Keddie (1971) on classroom knowledge; and Willis (1977) on the transition from school to work. Though the theoretical frameworks of these studies are similar to that of the present study, it should be noted that there are wide methodological differences between them since they were conducted within theories that ranged from symbolic interactionism to Marxism.

Since the present study has been influenced to a great extent by the **new directions** movement of the late 1960s onwards, it is necessary to examine briefly some important theoretical principles of this movement, and to see how these fit into the framework of this study. The dominant research paradigm in sociology in the 1950s, that of structural functionalism and empiricism, is inappropriate since it tends to take a very objective and deterministic view of social reality.<sup>8(p. 36)</sup> On the contrary, **new directions** sociology and its accompanying theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism, sociological phenomenology, and certain varieties of Marxism are of greater value.

In particular, it is their emphasis on the subjective elements of social reality, knowledge and human nature which suits the design of the present study. The general argument of these theories is that there are no fixed meanings in the social world, that reality arises from an on-going process in which individuals interact and give meanings to social situations, and that knowledge is socially constructed. Therefore, events, social occurrences and relationships cannot be considered outside of interactive settings in which they originate.

In the present study it has been found that stress on the active potential of man is of greater value than the over-emphasis of structural functionalism on the determining effect of social systems on thought and action. The strongly positivistic stance of the structural functional approach to research is another reason for its rejection. Structural functionalism prescribes a very rigorous methodological approach to measuring and quantifying observations, by which it becomes a scientific method.<sup>9</sup>(p. 36)

This concept of the scientific method is modelled on the lines of the natural sciences, in particular physics (Toulmin, 1972). It refers mainly to the testing of theories in a very factual way. Thus, it is claimed that a body of scientific knowledge can be built and kept quite separate from commonsense, everyday occurrences. Positivism argues that logic is the defining feature of all science.

Those who subscribe to this thought believe that the sociology of education should explain the social world in law-like statements, similar to those stated in the natural sciences. In this positivist version of science the epistemological and ontological emphasis is on phenomena that are directly observable. The study of the hidden aspects of human behaviour such as beliefs, values, and attitudes is dismissed as metaphysical nonsense.

Clearly, this positivistic approach is unsuitable for the purpose of the present study which is concerned with the changing conditions in the lives of students, their interpretations of situa-

tions in which they find themselves, and their eventual educational and occupational destinations. The rigid prescriptions of positivism are inappropriate for studying such aspects as the students' intentions, interactions, and their interpretations of the wider society. The anti-positivistic stance of qualitative research is preferred for a more effective explanation of the cultural production of meanings in the process of occupational choice. The reflexive nature of this kind of study can also be accommodated more easily through the qualitative approach.

It is also doubtful whether it is theoretically and methodologically possible to study human actions through methods which are derived from the natural and physical sciences (Johnson, 1975:7). For example, in his discussion on the positivist's obsession with the scientific method, Filstead (1970:2) quotes Deutscher (1966:241):

**"In attempting to assume the stance of a physical science, we have necessarily assumed its epistemology, its assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the appropriate means of knowing, including the rules of scientific evidence... One of the consequences of using the natural science model was to break down human behavior in a way that was not only artificial but which did not jibe with the manner in which the behavior was observed."**

The aims of the present study can hardly be accommodated by the positivist's claim that knowledge is independent of the knowing mind. Symbolic interactionism and sociological phenomenology which are the main theoretical foundations of this study do not assume that knowledge and the ability to understand behaviour increase directly with the distance from the subjects under investigation. On the contrary, these theories make the qualitative researcher conscious of the need to be aware of the tremendous qualitative differences between objective knowledge about, and intersubjective acquaintance with, the data of reality. They also stress the need to reduce the distance between the researcher and the subjects whom he is studying.



### 2.3 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM, SOCIOLOGICAL PHENOMENOLOGY, AND MARXIST CULTURAL THEORY

An integrated theoretical framework which incorporates the principles of symbolic interactionism, sociological phenomenology, and certain varieties of Marxism is well suited to the qualitative research paradigm proposed for this study. It is therefore necessary to develop an integrated theoretical framework within which the qualitative researcher will be able to develop the connection between macro sociological and historical processes on the one hand, and individual biographies on the other. This would make it possible to examine the social context in which unique individuals are acting and interacting; the internal structure and dynamics of that context, the opportunity that it makes available, and the constraints which it imposes.

Another reason for adopting this framework is that all of these theories reject the subject-object dualism which structural functionalism and empiricism support. Instead, they recognise the interdependence between the knowing subject and the objects of knowledge which is one of the central aspects of the present study. In this respect, Mead's ideas of the processes of social interaction as illustrated by his followers, Blumer, Hughes, Becker and Geer (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975:14) are of particular relevance. They argued that "men are" constantly in a process of interpretation and definition as they move from one situation to another, and it is the task of the interactionist to reveal the processes through which actions are constructed.

The value of symbolic interactionism is its insistence on the study of processes in small-scale or micro settings to get an in-depth understanding of the symbolic meanings that emerge over a period of time through interaction. Human experience is such that the process of defining objects is ever-changing and subject to constant re-definitions. The symbolic interactionist perspective is closely relevant to the present study's concern with variations in behaviour that reflect changing symbols, images and conceptions of the students in micro settings

such as classrooms, individual counselling sessions and places of employment. It is important to discover how people see themselves in such settings.

Sociological phenomenology is another theoretical perspective which has much to offer. It attempts to explain the knowledge and assumptions which people come to acquire and act upon in their world (Meighan, 1981:227). Schutz (1971), and Berger and Luckmann (1976) are perhaps the best-known exponents of this perspective. They argue that knowledge is not given in consciousness, but rather is taken for granted by all of us in our everyday lives. Like symbolic interactionism sociological phenomenology is also well suited to the qualitative paradigm proposed for this study since it is opposed to any kind of mechanistic interpretation of human behaviour, and rejects all forms of determinism, whether biological, psychological, social or cultural (Douglas, 1971; Schutz, 1962; Berger and Luckmann, 1976).

Of particular relevance is the fact that sociological phenomenology explores the subtle texture of meaning which constitutes reality (Sharp and Green, 1975:20-1), by describing how men define their world and typify it, and their positions within it. In doing so, this perspective argues that consciousness and the self are never fixed and static. This perspective can help us to understand how the students in this study are always open to continual socialisation and change as they move from school into the adult world. Social action is not regarded as the mere mechanistic expression of social structure, but society is seen as a process of creative interpretations by individuals who are engaged in a vast number of concerted interactions with each other. Therefore, our task is to explore the interpretations of human meanings that constitute society. In this case, it is the interpretation of meanings underlying the transitional process.

There is, of course a considerable overlap between symbolic interactionism and sociological phenomenology. It is almost impossible to describe the processes of social life, which

is the main concern of symbolic interactionism, without taking into account the meanings which the participants give to objects and actions in that life, which is the aim of sociological phenomenology. However, despite their strengths, both perspectives contain certain weaknesses.

For example, they tend to neglect the significance of social structures in their explanation of human consciousness (Sharp and Green, 1975:6). Interactionist studies, in particular have been criticised for failing to take account of the constraints on actions which arise from the wider social structure (Karabel and Halsey, 1976; Young and Whitty, 1976; Williamson, 1974). It is doubtful, for example, whether symbolic interactionism and sociological phenomenology can, on their own, provide an adequate basis for an understanding of the educational and career routes of the students in this study. A study of the process of educational and occupational choices requires not only an examination of intentions and forms of social consciousness, but also an examination of the interrelationship between these and the dominant structural features of the society in which they are located. This would be a more complete theoretical base in which both man and society can be understood.

Sharp and Green (1975:28-9) criticise sociological phenomenology for underplaying the extent to which the negotiation of meanings in social situations takes place within a context of certain material and other constraints. They say that not all participants have equal power to define the terms of the debate in which they are engaged. Since resources and power are distributed unequally in the macro society, this will affect the interactions of individuals in the micro context, setting certain objective limits and conditions to their experience. If this is overlooked, then the constraints of the macro structure may be masked.

The limitations of both these theories can be overcome if they are used in conjunction with the cultural perspective of Marxism. This approach which has been effectively used in cultural studies in recent years at the **Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies**

at the University of Birmingham can also be adopted in the present study. There are several examples of students whose choices reflect some of the cultural patterns present in the wider society. These include structural determinants such as the economy, the labour market and unemployment.

Although the Marxist perspective emphasises the structural constraints of the larger system of social relationships in which the individual is embedded, this does not mean that the actions of the individual are wholly determined by these objective relationships. If this is the case, it would denote a form of structural determinism which the **new sociology of education** and the qualitative research paradigm reject. This use of the Marxist perspective does not unduly narrow the range of possibilities for human action. Within the context of the present study it can be used to understand how certain individuals and groups use their symbolic, ideological and cultural resources to explore and make sense of the structural and material conditions of their existence.

Some examples of cultural studies which draw their perspectives from a Marxist approach are those of Willis (1979) on school and work, and McRobbie (1978) on the culture of working-class girls. While both these studies focus on the cultural production of meanings, they also develop some conceptualization of the situations that individuals find themselves in, of the structure of opportunities, the situations made available to them, and the kinds of constraints which are imposed.

#### 2.4 THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION THEORY

Together with the theoretical perspectives just outlined, the cultural production theory can also be used to explain the social construction of educational and career pathways. If lived experience is an important aspect of social processes, then the theory of cultural production can be quite useful to explain how students produce their own meanings, when choosing careers. Since cultural studies are usually concerned with the social processes through which people collectively produce

the social and material aspects of their life, they also help to capture the dynamic nature of social process. This production of meanings takes place at the cultural level,<sup>10</sup>(p. 36) and is evident in the range of everyday material practices of a group, which has to be seen in its historical context. The production of the students' meanings in this study are located in the school, family and work settings. The cultural production theory can be used to advantage to examine the many definitions, re-definitions and struggles which the students are engaged in as they make their choices.

When culture is seen in this way, it gives a class or race group its very specific identity, pointing out its relatively coherent systems of material practices and its interlocking symbolic systems. The cultural forms emerge from the everyday existence of the group's commonplace shared concerns, activities and struggles. It is mainly through struggle that a group's members become acutely aware of their condition of existence and relationship to other groups. Willis (1983:113-14) illustrates this in the case of the lower working class in England, saying that the characteristic features of its life-style include certain concrete forms of resistance, and relatively rational collective responses to current dilemmas and possibilities.

This use of the cultural production theory is also well suited to the qualitative research paradigm of the present study because it stresses the notion of people as active social agents rather than as passive bearers and transmitters of structure and ideology.<sup>11</sup>(p. 36) It also presents a dynamic picture of society as always moving, always changing, and though appearing to be stable, is full of contradictions and uncertainties. Once the contradictory flow of social process has been grasped, it is possible to identify particular elements of a culture. The production of culture suggests the nature of struggle and contest, both of which are essential characteristics of modern, industrial societies (Edwards, 1979). Resistance and contradictions are general characteristics of human action. As human beings collectively create their conditions of life, they are constantly revealing the mismatches and ragged edges. This

is typical of the process of occupational choice.

Thus, the concept of culture is rescued from its traditional status as the mere expression of other forces. Unlike vulgar representations of Marxism that look for the imprint of economic ideology on everything, this is a more sophisticated approach which interprets culture in a complex way. Apple (1982a:27) says it is not a form of false consciousness imposed by an economy, but rather it is part of the lived culture arising from the material conditions of day-to-day experiences. It is the lived culture of the students within the material conditions of the family, school, work and the wider society which is an important consideration here.

The cultural reproduction theory together with the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism, sociological phenomenology and Marxist cultural studies can be selectively used at appropriate stages in this study to create a proper balance between identity and social structure. Therefore, the notion of cultural production and struggle should ultimately be seen as an aspect of a broader view of society, in which the identities of individuals are related to the structures of society in an active, non-mechanistic way (Giroux, 1981:26-7; Apple, 1982a:26). The essential structures of society are not simply externally imposed on its members, but are produced through the collective self-formation of these people. The students in the present study should therefore be seen as part of these structures, experiencing them in their everyday practices in families, schools and jobs. In devising strategies of survival, they are building alternative meanings and practices in their daily institutions. These are ultimately organised and connected to the work of other individuals and groups.

When identity and structure are related in this way, we are able to see how they are embedded dynamically within the real lives of people, and are not merely a reflection of what is out there. For example, Bernstein (1977a:166) says that structural relationships do not necessarily imply a static theory. The relationship between interacting individuals is essentially

a structural relationship, and specific identities are a result of the nature of that relationship. He says that structural relationships carry implicit and explicit messages of power and control, and these to some extent shape the form of the response to them at the level of interaction.

## 2.5 REFLEXIVITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This proposed theoretical framework also adequately supports the reflexive approach adopted in the research methodology of this study. Reflexivity is an essential characteristic of the qualitative paradigm. Otherwise, it will present a straightforward, cultural description which is a major drawback of many qualitative studies, especially those that are based on the naturalistic tradition. Hammersley (1983a:5), for example, says that naturalistic, ethnographic studies in particular are structured in such a way as to suggest that they simply reflect the world as it is, presenting an unproblematic account of what is observed. Since naturalism proposes that what goes on in the field must be undisturbed, all that the researcher needs to do is to be present and to act neutrally. This stance is similar in some respects to that of the value free position of positivism since it does not encourage the development of a critical reflexive account of the research process.

Atkinson (mimeo paper quoted by Hammersley, 1983a:9) says that:

**"the stance of the 'naturalist' or 'realist' as the passive transcriber of nature's dictates may be that of the dispassionate observer, but it is not that of the reflexive subject-object which is the interactionist's social actor."**

The symbolic interactionist, phenomenological framework of the present study enables the researcher to examine the effects of his own role, by critically analysing the interactions which he is involved in, and the type of knowledge that he is producing through his interpretations. He is forced to acknowledge that the research which he is producing is a social activity, his own actions being open to analysis in much the same way as those of the participants who are being studied. Social research must be treated as a process in which the researcher constructs lines of action over time to achieve his goals in the situations

which face him (Hammersley, 1983a:3). Since his role of negotiating with others, and the choice of methods which are available to him will influence his findings to some extent, these should be closely scrutinised.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

Instead of applying a rigid set of principles to research strategies, the integrated theoretical framework proposed for this study allows for a variety of qualitative techniques to be used, and for a wide range of other considerations. These include the choices open to individuals in specific situations, and the influence of social structures which not only constrain, but also make possible particular lines of action. By looking at both the micro and macro contexts, and by relating identity to structure in the production of culture, this theoretical framework can be used to analyse the thoughts, feelings and intentions of the individual student, and the structure and operation of collective actions of groups of students.

The use of an integrated theoretical framework makes it possible to shift from one perspective to another, thus building up an adequate view of the whole social process which is being studied (Denzin, 1970:5-6). This approach also demands variability in the research process as circumstances change, and to continually evaluate methodological and theoretical principles. Hence the need for reflexivity.

This eclectic approach indicates that a study of the process of educational and career choices, school, work, unemployment and family circumstances cannot be seen as merely reflective of wider social problems, or solely as interactional processes. It is necessary to use relevant theories which directly address the institutional processes themselves so that phenomena such as class, race, gender, production and reproduction can be examined in both micro and macro contexts.



# NOTES

1. Olsen (1968:1) discusses the importance of studying processes in social organisations. He says that the study of process focusses on what is **happening**. Processes are the action part of a system. Nothing in the social world is ever fixed or final. People, things and organisations are always taking on new characteristics through the process of change.
2. The theories of Ginsberg **et.al.** (1951), Super (1957), Holland (1966), and Roe (1956) are very popular amongst careers-guidance counsellors. Ginsberg's theories explain occupational choice as a sequence of development stages leading to entry into an occupation. Super relies heavily on the work of Ginsberg and explains the whole of life as comprising five major developmental stages of growth. Holland also uses a similar framework to explain how occupational choices develop out of the search for work situations which provide people with outlets for their particular life-styles. Roe explores the relationship between personality and occupational choice. She makes use of the hierarchical need theory of Maslow, and the psychoanalytic interpretations of early childhood experiences.
3. Schwartz and Jacobs (1979:4) discuss the characteristics of the positivistic, scientific nature of sociology by contrasting it with qualitative sociology. They say that quantitative sociologists assign numbers to qualitative observations, and thus provide data by counting and measuring things. Qualitative sociologists, on the other hand report their observations in the natural language. The difference in the use of these notation systems corresponds to the vast differences in values, goals, and procedures for doing social research. In his discussion on the **two sociologies**, Dawe (1970:207-18) gives a critical review of the sociological traditions underlying these two approaches.

4. The positivistic, quantitative research paradigm is the favoured approach of most social science, empirical researchers in South Africa - by the **Human Sciences Research Council**, University Institutes of Social Research, and students engaged in research for higher degrees.
5. The **Chicago School** of the 1920s and 30s originated this tradition of the qualitative methods. Drawing on the analogy of plant and animal ecology, researchers in this school set out to document the very different patterns of life to be found in various parts of the city of Chicago. At a later stage they used the same kind of approach to study the cultures of different occupations and deviant groups such as those of art (Becker, 1974), surfing (Irwin, 1973), or racing (Scott, 1968).
6. In Weber's definition of sociology, the German word, **verstehen** has been translated as understanding, and is closely associated with qualitative methodology. The method of **verstehen** or interpretive understanding is well suited to the investigation of subjective meanings. It stresses that in contrast with the natural sciences, the cultural or social sciences are concerned with subject matter of a fundamentally different kind. The method of **verstehen** - of placing oneself in the role of the actor - was seen as a means of relating inner experience to outward actions. The Durkheimian tradition stressed that the social sciences were to remain value-free. The scientist was to refrain from basing his conclusions on value judgments. By contrast, Weber stressed the need to enter into the lives of people if there is to be personal understanding (**verstehen**) of their position.
7. Ethnographic research studies are rare in South Africa. A study which claims to be ethnographic is that of Steinberg (1983) on a South African Greek community. Sociology has a longer history in South African universities than the sociology of education (Kinloch, 1972:15). The development of sociology of education is relatively recent, and can hardly be compared with the advances in development which have taken place in Britain. It

is confined mainly to the White **English** universities of Natal, Rhodes, Cape Town and Witwatersrand, and is noticeably absent in the **Afrikaans** universities. However, it is taught at the **Coloured** university of the Western Cape, and the **Indian** university of Durban-Westville.

8. The dominant research paradigm adopted by the **Human Sciences Research Council** and the **Department of Manpower** in South Africa is the structural functional, empiricist, positivistic one. In their studies on occupational and manpower requirement they favour the measurement, political arithmetical type of approach. The structural functional, empiricist paradigm is also the favoured approach in many higher degree studies in the social sciences undertaken at most South African universities.
9. The tenets of positivism are discussed in detail by Keat and Urry (1975), Giddens (1979a) and Cohen (1980).
10. Willis (1983:137-38) uses the term **cultural level** "to include specific cultural forms as well as language, practical consciousness and more individual ways of making meaning. 'Cultural forms' designate either texts of some kind, or a relatively tight set of symbols, discourses and texts in relation to the routine activities and practice of a specific set of agents in a specific site-counter-school culture, shop floor culture."
11. This explanation of cultural production contrasts with that of Bourdieu's (1974:32-46; Kennett, 1973:237-49) cultural reproduction theory. Bourdieu's explanations of **habitus** or **cultural capital**, and **symbolic violence** do not have the same implications of resistance, struggle and the production of meanings. It is basically a traditional socialisation model - the bourgeoisie transmit their culture to their children, quite unproblematically. It does not explain how the culture of the dominated groups is produced, and therefore cannot be regarded as an adequate theoretical basis for a politics of change, or for the production of alternative consciousness.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### 3. SOCIAL MOBILITY, EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND LIFE CHANCES

It is important to examine the career and educational pathways of the students in this study against a general background of social mobility, equality of opportunity and life chances in the South African society. This is necessary because both occupation and education play a central role in affecting people's mobility and life chances in modern western societies. Both these factors are often crucial in determining, for example, income, standard of living, social relationships, and the environment one is able to provide for one's family (Sofer, 1974:15). There are great differences between the life experiences and life chances of different occupational subgroups and subcultures in modern society, as illustrated in the studies of Glass (1954), Blau and Duncan (1967), Lipset and Bendix (1967), and Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980).

It is within this context that the present chapter discusses the impact of the structural determinants of race, class and gender on career and educational choices. This also provides a frame of reference for understanding how certain individuals come to interpret their particular opportunities in life through their choice of jobs. However, these issues of race, class and gender make it very difficult to study social mobility, equality of opportunity and life chances in a straightforward way. It is necessary, especially when studying a society like the one in South Africa, to take into account the existence of various status groups which are based largely on race, as well as the power relationships between these groups. Therefore, the career and educational pathways of the students in this study have to be carefully examined in terms of such status groups and patterns of power relationships. These have also to be seen in the light of the degrees of openness and closure reflected in contemporary South African society.<sup>1</sup>(p. 58)

In race - and class-stratified societies, most of the advantages accrue to the dominant races and the upper classes. Dahrendorf (1979:28) says that when seen in this way, life chances may

be regarded as the sum total of opportunities offered to the individual by his society, or more specifically by the position which he occupies in that society.<sup>2</sup>(p. 58)

However, it is important to note that life chances are determined not only by positions within the social-class structure of a society (as is revealed by most studies on social mobility), but also by ethnic, social and religious affiliations. This is an important fact to consider when studying life chances in a country like South Africa, because even with social position being held constant, Africans, Coloureds and Indians<sup>3</sup>(p. 58) have poorer life chances than Whites, and Africans and Coloureds poorer chances than Indians. Since these factors cut across social class, the result is a complex pattern of the determination of life chances. Therefore, when interpreting the experiences of the students in this study and how they view mobility and life chances, it is important to note that they belong to a distinct minority group in South Africa, identifiable by history, race, culture and status.

### 3.1 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The position of Indians in the stratification of South African society highlights some of the inequalities experienced by this group. Differences in opportunity, of course, are not unusual because an examination of the stratification systems of most modern societies reveals that the opportunities available for different groups are not the same. Stratification systems which provide little opportunity for social mobility may be described as "closed", while those with a relatively high rate of social mobility are considered to be "open". The way in which members of particular groups perceive the opportunities available to them will be an important element in explaining their career choices.

Although in western societies, occupational patterns are normally allocated on the basis of merit, some people start off with advantages of better opportunities to occupy the most prestigious

jobs. This is noticeable in both race- and class- stratified societies. A comparison between Africans, Coloureds and Indians, on the one hand, and Whites, on the other, in South Africa gives some indication of the effects of the stratification system on mobility and life chances. Africans, Indians and Coloureds form the base of the stratification system, and inequalities in the provision of education and in labour market practices are clearly evident.

However, social inequalities cannot be reduced to educational and labour market policies and practices alone. According to Evetts (1973:55) the concept of equality of opportunity conceals a number of different interpretations. In no society can one expect to find absolute or perfect equality of opportunity. It is also important to remember that though we may never be able to agree on what equality of opportunity is, or the extent to which it can be achieved, we can at least try to understand how inequality is created, sustained and reproduced through people's actions. This can be done by examining the students' decisions and choices in the light of the opportunities available to them as members of a particular status group.

### 3.2 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND EDUCATION

To get some understanding of educational and other inequalities in the South African society it is important to look at the hierarchical arrangement of status groups. This approach to the study of stratification can be studied through the conflict theory such as that of Weber, which points to the determinants of various outcomes in the struggle among status groups (Collins, 1977:118).

Status groups share common cultures, and persons within a status group share a sense of status equality. Weber's conflict theory indicates that such status may also be derived from : differences of life-style based on social class; differences in life situation based on power position; and differences in life situations based on culture.

In South Africa such status divisions are related very largely to race. However, the divisions between groups are marked by both racial and class lines. According to the status hierarchy, Whites are at the top and Africans are at the bottom, with Indians and Coloureds occupying intermediate positions. Within this racial hierarchy there are also class divisions.

Within the White group, it is the Afrikaners who have most of the power, and the struggle amongst groups in South Africa centre largely around the definitions created by Afrikaners. According to Afrikaner nationalist ideology, the cultural identity of the White race and the preservation of its political and economic supremacy have to be maintained. Muir (1983:6) says that:

"In presenting the arguments of the White ruling class or power group about the cultural identity of groups, the focus is on the fact that this class or power group manipulates concepts for its own purposes. It chooses to underplay racial difference and to represent it in cultural terms, i.e. they do not claim racial superiority as a fact of racial difference, but on the grounds of the cultural identity of all groups."

Thus, according to the policy of apartheid, the status superiority of White groups over all others is maintained. Although the dominant White Afrikaner group manipulates the concepts of race and culture to legitimise its ideology of apartheid, the dominated groups use the same concepts in their struggle to challenge this philosophy. Such a struggle of contested ideas is witnessed, for example, in the dominant group's provision of education for others. Although the "... other groups react to the dominant view of social reality, and although their reaction is in conflict with it, the reaction is controlled by the dominant viewpoint and the resulting conflict reinforces the social reality." (Muir, 1983:12)

As far as the present study is concerned, one of the aspects of the struggle of Indians in South Africa is their desire to acquire educational credentials and rewarding occupations.

As an intermediate status group, they perceive this to be an important avenue through which they can achieve mobility. Collins (1979) suggests that social-class stratification in industrial societies is based largely on the possession of such credentials. Hussain (1977:104) points to the relationship between educational qualifications and the occupational structure.

In the present study, some of these issues mentioned by Collins and Hussain became relevant when accounting for the students', their parents', and employers' beliefs in educational qualifications. All of these people were very conscious of the importance of general, professional and vocational qualifications. The last two categories were seen as crucial for entry into occupations, and were considered to be good indicators of technical competence for certain specific occupations. The parents of the school-leavers were particularly conscious of this. Many parents and their children also realised that though general educational qualifications were not geared to any particular occupations, these were nevertheless essential as proof of technical competence for a variety of occupations. The students and parents of the tertiary education group were particularly perceptive of the ideological role of the school in the distribution of credentials. They saw the school as a vital agency in allocating, selecting and training people for specific adult roles. The students', parents' and employers' beliefs in the value of qualifications stemmed from their understanding of the relationship between education, the economy, and life chances in a capitalist society.

The contest for educational credentials and jobs in which Indians are involved must be seen in terms of the continual struggle in the South African society for wealth, power and prestige. Their struggle can be explained in terms of their cohesion within a status group which is a key resource in the struggle against other status groups. However, the struggle of Indians as a status group is not just against Whites, but also against Coloureds and Africans. These conflicts are based on ethnically founded status cultures.



When they are competing against other groups, Indians have to initially define their status in relation to the status of Whites, the most powerful group who have the power to define their own status differently. However, within the Indian group there are also power differences based on class, linguistic and religious differences, and this gives rise to subgroups which are involved in an internal struggle against each other.

Therefore, in addition to locating their status within an apartheid society, the life chances of Indians also need to be examined in terms of their specific historical, material and cultural circumstances. The majority of the present generation of Indians are the descendants of indentured labourers brought in the late nineteenth century to work on the sugar plantations in Natal.<sup>4</sup>(p. 59) A second group of Indian immigrants, consisting mainly of traders followed the indentured labourers to settle in Natal. Initially, the majority of Indians worked in the agricultural sector, but by the 1980s they became the most urbanised of all race groups. Nattrass (1981:11) says that only 13 per cent of Indians live in areas outside the towns. The majority live in Natal, and the heaviest concentrations are found in townships in and around Durban.

The heavy and artificial concentration of Indians in a single province of South Africa is explained mainly by the policies restricting their freedom to move freely from one part of South Africa to another. Until very recently, Indians were confined mainly to Natal because they were perceived as an economic threat to White traders in other provinces. As a result about 70 to 80 per cent of Indians reside in Natal where they constitute about 12 per cent of the population, but dispersed throughout South Africa they form less than 3 per cent of the population.

The distribution of Indians in relation to other race groups is shown in table 3.1 (on page 43). This table also shows the numerical strength of Indians in South Africa, in the province of Natal, and in the magisterial district of Durban and Pinetown.<sup>5</sup>(p. 59)

TABLE 3.1

## POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA, NATAL AND DURBAN

	SOUTH AFRICA	NATAL	DURBAN AND PINETOWN
Africans	17 479 000	1 358 120	143 940
Coloureds	2 671 000	91 020	55 140
Asians	838 000	665 340	499 520
Whites	4 603 000	561 860	329 080
TOTAL	25 591 000	2 676 340	1 027 680

Source : 1982 South African Statistics. Compiled by Department of Statistics, Pretoria : 1.4, 1.9, 1.15

A striking feature of the culture of Indian South Africans is their profound belief in the value of education, which becomes clearly evident in this study from the comments which parents have made about their children's future. This belief in education is linked both to Indian culture in general, and in particular to the history of Indians in South Africa. For the first sixty years after their arrival in South Africa, state initiative in providing education for Indians was generally lacking, since an unskilled labour force did not need to be educated (Ginwala, 1979:15). However, despite this the Indian community has made significant progress in the field of education, mainly by providing its own schools through self help and financial contributions. Like most other people in modern industrial society, Indians have come to regard education as an important means of achieving social mobility. In particular, they see it as a way of overcoming economic obstacles and race discrimination.

### 3.3 RACE AND ETHNICITY

Since status grouping on the basis of race is a major dimension of the stratification system of South Africa, the factors of race and racism cannot be overlooked in any explanation of career choices. The essential feature of racism may be considered to be the defence of a system from which advantage is derived.

Carrington (1983:42), for example, says that "racism is variously premised upon beliefs, presuppositions, preconceptions and misconceptions, forms of augmentation and 'theories' about the biological and/or cultural superiority of one racial group and the concomitant inferiority of others." Racist practices therefore ensure the continuation of a privileged relationship.

Racism can also be viewed as a body of ideas which rationalise and legitimise social practices which reinforce an unequal distribution of power between groups. It surfaces not only at the level of commonsense, but in terms of a carefully worked-out ideology - as in the policy of apartheid. In the case of the latter, racism is expressed institutionally in the form of systematic practices that deny and exclude dominated race groups from access to social resources (Wellman, 1977:39). This concept should therefore be broadened to include sentiments which in their consequence, if not their intent, support the racial *status quo*.

Racism is a very strong characteristic of the South African society, and any attempt to leave racial categories out of an analysis of this society could be very misleading. The implications of race extend into almost every facet of South African society, and more than any other single characteristic it is the most important social differentiating factor.<sup>6</sup> (p. 59) Of the impact of race on everyday life in South Africa, Lever (1978:6) says: "The race of the individual affects virtually every aspect of his social life."

The concept of race has been used by the dominant group in South Africa to unite the White group. Irrespective of the social class to which they belong, the factor of race ensures that social status and upward mobility accrues to Whites. Some glaring forms of racial discrimination which have had adverse effects on life chances are to be found in the employment and educational sectors. African, Coloured and Indian workers in South Africa, for example, are over-represented in unskilled, menial and poorly-paid jobs, and are at the bottom of the occupa-

pational structure. These are the ones who are most likely to be retrenched in times of relatively high unemployment.

Similar trends are also visible in Britain where West Indians and Asians are overwhelmingly concentrated in manual jobs, or in non-manual work that is neither managerial nor supervisory in any real sense (Green, 1979:29-30). These jobs are characterised by either bad conditions, low pay, a high proportion of shift work, or all three (Smith, 1974; McIntosh and Smith, 1974; Smith, 1976). In South Africa, the racist stance of white labour is reflected in its desire to protect itself against the use of cheap Black labour. For example, though African, Coloured and Indian trade unions exist and are legal, their status may be heavily circumscribed; and while legal restrictions concerning job reservation have been removed, there are still strong customary prohibitions which prevent Africans, Coloureds and Indians from engaging in certain occupations. Their rights of movement and employment are also restricted by a variety of other measures (Watts, 1980a:3).

The South African society reflects clear differentials in occupational status, with the white group dominating the executive, professional, higher supervisory, non-routine white-collar and higher technical and skilled positions both in the private and public sector. Schlemmer (1976:30) says that within this wider societal structure the Indian group occupies an intermediate position with many filling lower-skilled occupations. The majority are occupied in unskilled and semi-skilled work. Despite this, a significantly larger proportion of this group than the African and Coloured groups occupies managerial and executive positions, as well as non-routine white-collar positions. These trends are evident in table 3.2 (on page 46).

TABLE 3.2

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES AND DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE  
PERSONS IN SOUTH AFRICA - 1980

CATEGORY	ASIANS	%	AFRICANS	%	COLOURED	%	WHITES	%
Professional, technical and related worker	22 520	8.80	177 180	3.18	51 280	5.53	371 300	19.49
Administrative and managerial	4 280	1.67	4 040	0.07	3 000	0.32	125 820	6.60
Clerical and related	53 000	20.72	200 640	3.60	69 940	7.54	505 220	26.52
Sales	37 220	14.55	166 200	2.98	38 300	4.13	195 620	10.27
Service	16 580	6.48	1 102 840	19.77	152 840	16.47	155 820	8.18
Farm, forestry, fisherman and hunter	5 900	2.31	1 114 340	19.98	154 680	16.67	88 900	4.67
Production and related worker and labourer	103 940	40.63	2 143 220	38.43	387 280	41.74	434 400	22.80
Unclassified	12 380	4.84	668 580	11.99	70 460	7.60	27 980	1.47
TOTAL	255 820	100	5 577 040	100	927 780	100	1 905 060	100

Source : 1982 South African Statistics. Compiled by Department of Statistics, Pretoria: 1.31.

Disparity in educational provision is another area of life chances that is affected by race and ethnicity. In South Africa, racial discrimination in education is evident at all levels. Separate schooling was practised long before 1948, but the present government has tightened its control by removing African, Coloured and Indian schools from provincial control. Each of these groups has its own Education Department which is controlled by the central government.

Most of the African, Indian and Coloured schools in urban areas are located in high density, sub-economic townships which exhibit many characteristics of social deprivation. There are many differences in the quality of educational provision for the various races, but the most striking differences are those

of expenditure, and pupil-teacher ratios. In 1983, the per capita amounts were : White R1211.00; Indian R711.16; Coloured R497.59; and African R146.44 (Cooper *et al.*, 1984:420).

Pupil-teacher ratios, and qualifications of teachers also reflect great disparities between the Whites and other race groups. Pupil-teacher ratios for the various groups in 1983 were: White 18.2 to 1; Indian 23.6 to 1; Coloured 26.7 to 1; African 42.7 to 1 (Cooper *et al.*, 1984:421).

In the light of these circumstances, the interpretations of the students' choices in this study should be seen in the context of their perceptions of opportunities in a race-stratified society. It should also be borne in mind that these choices may be related in some ways to their status as an intermediate group, as well as a minority race group.

#### 3.4 SOCIAL CLASS

While the students in the present study were quite conscious of their status according to race, it should also be borne in mind that in a number of cases their choices and actions reflected social-class differences in values, attitudes and beliefs. Such differences indicate that in addition to their intermediate status in a race-stratified society there are also status differences within the Indian group. This is an important factor to be considered, because even though South Africa is primarily a race-stratified society, the influence of social class on life chances also exists. Muir (1983:8), for example, says that there is the tension between the push and pull of race and class in the economic and political structures of the South African society. This is especially evident in the case of the Indian group where the existence of social classes must be seen as a second order stratification in the context of the wider society.<sup>7(p. 59)</sup> When Indians first settled in Natal, they brought with them the social aspects of Indian life such as caste and village organisation. However, as Indians were accommodated within the western economy of South Africa, these aspects were soon replaced with new class divisions.

Social-class differences relating to early school leaving, entrance to university, and job opportunities are evident in the present study. For example, those who left school before completing their secondary education and who entered semi-skilled jobs are mainly from the lower working class. The members of this group also experienced long spells of unemployment.

Though social-class influences may not be as pronounced as in the case of Britain or the U.S.A., nevertheless they also exist and affect life chances within the Indian community in South Africa. Despite the fact that many traces of traditional Indian culture still characterise this group, generally, it is true to say that urbanisation, western education and occupational differences have led to social-class differences. This is evident in table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3

ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE PERSONS BY OCCUPATIONAL GROUP -  
INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS 1970-1980

CATEGORY	1970	%	1980	%
Professional, technical and related worker	9 690	5.4	22 520	8.8
Administrative and managerial	1 840	1.0	4 280	1.7
Clerical and related worker	26 170	14.6	53 000	20.7
Sales worker	31 350	17.4	37 220	14.6
Service worker	16 890	9.4	16 580	6.5
Farm, forestry, fisherman and hunter	6 880	3.8	5 900	2.3
Production, transport worker and labourer	73 800	41.0	103 940	40.6
Unclassified	13 340	7.4	12 380	4.8
TOTAL	179 960	100	255 820	100

Sources : 1974 South African Statistics. Compiled by Department of Statistics, Pretoria: 1.27  
1982 South African Statistics. Compiled by Department of Statistics, Pretoria: 1.31

Though there is a lack of research in this area in South Africa, the influence of social class<sup>8 (p. 59)</sup> on life chances has been frequently researched in most of the European countries. In England, studies such as those of Floud (1950:118) indicate that social-class affiliation affects not only educational opportunity, but also the chances that one's children have of entering particular occupations. Membership of a social class also imposes upon the individual certain attitudes, values, and interests relating to his role and status in the political, economic, and occupational spheres. Though the higher social classes have better chances for a long life, advanced education, and high occupational achievement, it is important to note that the differences in life chances between the social classes are average, not absolute. In all societies, some persons born into the lower social classes manage to achieve as good a life as others who belong to the higher classes. This, of course will depend on the extent to which a society is open or closed.

In his discussion on social class and job opportunities, Musgrave (1979:330) says that the possible first choices of employment are greatly restricted by the pathways through which young people reach the age at which they leave school. Generally, children from lower-working-class backgrounds who are over-represented in the lower streams of the secondary school enter a different range of occupations from that of children of the upper middle classes. An education obtained in the upper streams of the secondary school leads to a level of the labour force that is different from that obtained in the lower streams.

Perhaps, the impact of social-class influences on social mobility in England has been best illustrated in major studies such as that of Glass in 1954, and more recently the Oxford Mobility Study undertaken by a team of sociologists at Nuffield College in 1972. Though the Oxford study confirms that the chances of improving one's social status got better in the post-war period because of the expansion of the middle and service sectors, nevertheless it is still much easier to retain high social status once born into it than it is to achieve it (Halsey,



1978:114). In other words: though social mobility out of the working-class has increased, middle-class children still have excellent chances of maintaining the status inherited from their parents (Copeman, 1955; Clements, 1958; Kelsall, 1955; Guttsman, 1965). High rates of self recruitment in the middle classes still continue.

The evidence of social-class determinants is perhaps most striking in the attempts to equalise educational opportunities. Research in this field in the United Kingdom has focussed consistently on the theme of **wastage of talent**, and showed that when secondary education is of different types, working-class children are less likely to enter the more academic schools and, once there, more likely to leave early.

The studies of Little and Westergaard (1964), Douglas (1964), Douglas, Ross and Simpson (1968), and government reports such as **Early Leaving** (Central Advisory Council for Education, England, 1954), and that of the **Crowther Committee** (Central Advisory Council for Education, England, 1959), each presented systematic evidence from relatively large samples to demonstrate the continued advantage for middle-class children compared with their working-class counterparts. This advantage clearly increases as the middle-class children move towards the upper rungs of the educational system. For example, the **Robbins Committee** (Central Advisory Council for Education, England, 1963) illustrated this with the calculation that the son of a professional worker had approximately eleven times the chance of selection for a grammar school as the son of a semi-skilled worker, and about twenty-five times the chance of going to university. Ford (1969) showed that similar processes of selection operated in the comprehensive school, despite the fact that the ideology of comprehensive schooling is to provide equal opportunities for all social groups. There are also considerable social-class differences affecting university entrance. This has been demonstrated by Halsey (1975:14-15), and also more recently in the Oxford Mobility Study.

The present study can benefit by considering some of the major trends in social class, educational opportunity and life chances, which the British studies point to. Some factors which may be taken into account when analysing the educational and career routes would be: the social criteria by which children from different social classes are processed in school, and later at work; and social-class differences in the influences of the family.

### 3.5 GENDER

The final area of opportunity and life chances to be discussed is that between the sexes; that is, the crucial dimension of sex and gender structuring. This is especially important when we consider the future of women in contemporary society. This is also a very relevant structural factor to consider in the present study since it includes girls from all social classes, and from both the ordinary and practical grade classes. This study therefore affords a good opportunity to examine many facets of gender structuring since there are girls amongst the early school-leavers, the unemployed, the employed, and those who entered domesticity and tertiary education.

Unfortunately, studies on gender in the Indian community are lacking. There are, however a few studies of a more general nature on the education of Indian girls, such as those of Rambiritch (1956) and Osman (1975). Since these do not provide an adequate background against which the empirical data related to gender can be analysed, it is necessary to review some overseas studies in this field.

Even in Britain, prior to the 1970s, research studies on social mobility and life chances rarely examined inequalities between the sexes in any depth. Girls and women are systematically excluded, for example, even in some recent studies such as that of Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) on family, class and education; and the study by Willis (1977) does not include female aspects of class culture. In previous studies, such

as those of Douglas (1964), and Douglas, Ross and Simpson (1968), the specific characteristics of masculine experience is treated as the general case, and terms like **class**, **education** and **occupation** are treated as neutral about gender. A notable exception, however, is the recent study of Jenkins (1983) on working-class youth life-styles in a housing estate on the outskirts of Belfast. Jenkins, deliberately includes both boys and girls in his study in an attempt to understand the passage between adolescence and adulthood, and between education and the labour market.

It was only in the last decade or so that gender inequalities have come under closer scrutiny, especially by feminist researchers such as Delamont (1980), Byrne (1978) and Deem (1980b). Byrne (1978), for example, examines the life chances of girls within the liberal reformist tradition, while Deem (1980b) looks at inequalities from a Marxist-feminist perspective. Though these two studies differ profoundly in their explanations, they reach very similar conclusions about the position of girls in education. The relevance of these overseas studies to the present study is their stress on the persistence and discrimination and differentiation in girls' education, especially at the higher levels. By focussing on the experiences of women in education and their subsequent entry to, and experiences of the labour market, these studies also illustrate how the category of gender is influential in structuring the actions, beliefs, values and life chances of females. The general argument is that the subordination of women to men in modern society is based on the dominance of patriarchal relations, the capitalist mode of production, the labour process, the social and sexual division of labour, and the family, as well as schooling.


The British studies demonstrate clearly how schools prepare women for domestic labour and a narrow range of female-dominated occupations. In this respect, women come to constitute a further dimension of the working class. Edwards (1979:195) says that the continuing discrimination against women results in a surplus labour force whose chief characteristic is its employment at low wages.

Hakim (1979), in his analysis of women's labour force participation showed that the majority of women are to be found in jobs where they are over-represented. Over 90 per cent of employees in the occupations of typing, secretarial work, nursing and catering are women. They also make up the majority of those working as cooks, kitchen hands, office cleaners, hairdressers and launderers. Women are also over-represented in the less skilled and lower-status positions.

It is also important to note that the labour market does not treat all women as an undifferentiated group. Women's chances in the market place also depend on factors like class, age and race, with young, White and apparently middle-class women at a premium. Griffin (1982:6) says that in Britain the young, White working-class and Black women are in the worst-paid, most menial jobs, and are more likely to be unemployed. Black school-leavers, especially girls experience considerable difficulties in gaining employment (Dex, 1979; Sinfield, 1981; Campbell and Jones, 1982).

The situation concerning African, Coloured and Indian women in South Africa is similar. However, the feminist movement is still in its infancy because the injustices of apartheid seem to overshadow the discrimination suffered by women. Wacks (1984) says that these women who represent half of the victims of apartheid are doubly oppressed, first by the political order, and second by the sex-based injustices.

However, it should be remembered that the life chances of Indian women are affected, not only by the structure of the wider society, but also by certain traditions within Indian culture which are discussed in the next chapter on the family. It is only recently that Indian women have entered certain higher levels of employment in increasing numbers. Some examples of the range of jobs which they occupy today include: machinists in clothing factories, shop assistants, clerks, typists, bank tellers, secretaries, nurses and teachers. Some highly qualified Indian women are doctors, lawyers, and academics at universities.



Some of these issues raised in the review of overseas studies should provide a useful context for the analysis of the cultural processes related to the structuring of gender roles. Factors such as patriarchal relations, the social and sexual division of labour, schooling for women's work, and socialisation into gender roles in the family are all relevant to the analysis of the career pathways of the students.

### 3.6 A RELATIONAL ANALYSIS

The experiences and interpretations of the students in this study cannot be separated from the unequal institutional arrangements and the values that dominate the industrial economy of the South African society. Therefore, to understand how life chances and opportunities are distributed, it is necessary to get an insight into the relationship between the students' education, the economic structure, family backgrounds, and the link between knowledge and power. Such a relational, structural and interpretive analysis makes it possible to look at ideological values, class relations, structures of social power, as well as racial, sexual and political, and economic influences on the consciousness of the students within a specific historical and socio-economic context. A cultural and ideological approach of this kind is of great value when analysing some of the complex ways in which social, economic, and political tensions and contradictions characterise the choices made by these students. When the transitional process is studied in this way, the roles of the school, family and the labour market indicate how cultural capital is preserved and distributed. In this study, it was essential to locate the knowledge taught in school, the roles of teachers, and the social relations that dominated the classrooms and places of employment within the larger nexus of relations to which all of these belong. For this, the concepts of ideology, hegemony, and the social distribution of knowledge were very useful.

#### 3.6.1 The Social Distribution of Knowledge

The analysis of the educational and career pathways of the

students in this study gives a clear indication of the uneven distribution of knowledge between the practical grade (mainly working class) and the ordinary grade (mainly middle class). This difference in the social distribution of knowledge emphasises the differences in power between these two groups, and consequently their life chances. The ordinary grade students had access to **"valuable"** knowledge; whereas the lack of this kind of academic knowledge amongst the practical grade students can be related to the absence in the working class generally of political and economic power in the wider society.

This distinct difference in the acquisition of knowledge can be traced not only to differences in school experiences, but also to patterns of socialisation in the families of the two groups. The kinds of cultural resources and symbols which the schools in this study selected and organised were closely related to the experiences and backgrounds of the students from middle-class families. They were thus easily **"processed"** for entry into tertiary education. On the other hand, the practical grade, working-class students were channelled towards the secondary labour market. In reproducing this kind of social inequality between the two groups, the schools acted as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony, and as agents of a selective tradition in the distribution of knowledge. The role of the school in this kind of people and knowledge processing has to be linked back to questions of power and control outside the school, by relating this to experiences in the family and the labour market.

### 3.6.2 Ideology

When the policies and practices of the schools and places of employment in this study are closely examined, it is possible to see how certain aspects of the collective culture of the macro society are presented as objective, factual knowledge. Many of their official messages regarding differentiated education, career guidance, recruitment practices, discipline, punctuality, productivity, mental and manual labour, and so on reflect the ideology of the dominant interests in the society.

In particular, these ideologies were reflected in the fundamental perspectives of both teachers and employers, especially when the school-leavers and young workers were labelled. This was also apparent when students were allotted to various **"packages"** of subjects in the curriculum. The ideological functions of school, education, and employment influenced the decisions of several students and parents who were clearly aware of the importance of gaining **"good examination results,"** of individual competition, of gaining access to prestigious courses of study in tertiary education, and of obtaining **"good jobs."** When school and work are studied in this light, political and economic ideologies enable us to look at their roles in the cultural and economic reproduction of class relations in an industrial society. This kind of analysis of ideology, the process of schooling and employment is crucial for an understanding of education and work as hegemonic forms. The educational and career pathways of the students in this study could hardly be explained without reference to ideology, hegemony, and their implications for an understanding of these students' life chances.

### 3.6.3 Hegemony

In this study, the actions of the students and their cultural interpretations of the structural constraints which they had to face seemed to account for the reproduction of class, gender and racial divisions. Ruling class hegemony was maintained through such actions and interpretations, rather than through the enforcement of the dominant ideology. One of the ways in which the students attempted to overcome some of the obstacles facing them in a race-, class- and gender-divided society was to try to achieve mobility through success in education. The belief in the value of educational qualifications and the desire for social mobility were typical of many of their explanations of educational and career choices. Their belief in the values of a western, industrial capitalist society reflects the extent to which education and the experience of work dominated their thinking. Such beliefs and values which are reflected in the culture of this dominated, minority, race group are similar

to those of the dominant, ruling class. And such beliefs and values saturated the consciousness of the students in this study, and were the source of their actions and meanings. This was reflected in the deeply ingrained meanings, practices, values and actions which typified their everyday lives in the family, school and workplace. It was very difficult for most of them to move beyond this absolute reality. Hegemony was established.

Schools, families, and places of employment are usually the main agencies of transmission of an effective dominant culture in western, industrial, capitalist society. While schools in a society may serve the interests of many individuals, they also seem to act as powerful agents in the economic and cultural reproduction of race, class and gender divisions in a stratified society. Their hegemonic and ideological forms of control saturate the minds of many teachers and pupils.

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter points to the inequalities of race, class and gender which are rooted in the economic, political and ideological forms and which affect the career pathways of school-leavers. Thus, education and employment opportunities become deeply political matters, and especially in South Africa with its distinctive racial divisions, these are issues which are essentially concerned with access to power, status and wealth.

It is important to consider such structural factors to understand how Indian school-leavers interpret their education and job experiences; and how the actions, beliefs and values related to their educational and career choices are structured and maintained. However, the students' interpretations should be seen, not only in the context of the wider society, but also within the context of their own material, cultural and historical circumstances.



### NOTES

1. Lipset and Bendix (1967:74) maintain that major studies on social mobility have shown that no known complex society may be correctly described as **closed** or static. Although the paths of mobility, and the extent to which persons may enter or leave different strata are not the same in all such societies, the number of persons in each who are able to rise above the position of their parents is large enough to indicate that social barriers are not insurmountable. It is important to consider a statement such as this when studying how race and class operate in South Africa.
2. The term **life chances** came into sociology from German origins, probably most directly from Max Weber. It refers to pre-determined expectations and outcomes that underlie the life experiences of people born in a given social-class position. Dahrendorf (1979:28) discusses Weber's use of the notion of chance as "**... the competition of different human types for life chances...**" Weber uses the notion of chance to indicate opportunities provided by the social structure. This use of the concept is relevant to the present study which discusses aspects such as economic, educational, political and job chances of Indians in a race-and class-stratified society.
3. The terms which are used in this study to designate the main groups in South Africa are:
  - (a) **African** : denotes all those-population groups which are Bantu speaking.
  - (b) **Indian** : refers to South Africans who originate from the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent, having first settled in Natal in 1860.
  - (c) **Asian** : refers to the various subgroups who are classified as Asian in terms of the population register, and will include those of Indian and Chinese descent. Approximately 98 per cent of the Asian group is made up of Indians.
  - (e) **Coloured** : refers to those who are classified as so-called Coloured in terms of the population

register and includes the descendants of the Khoi Khoi, the San, the Malay Slaves and a large number of inter-racial marriages.

- (e) **White** : refers to those classified as White, and who are mainly of European descent.
- 4. For more than a century after their arrival, Indian South Africans were not accepted as a permanent part of the population. They were always defined by the Whites as an alien group, and from 1928 when free passages were provided, Indians were encouraged to return to India (Lever, 1978:7). However, various schemes for voluntary repatriation which were initiated with the co-operation of the British Indian Government failed.
- 5. Statistics used in Part One of this study, which have been extracted from official publications and other sources, refer mainly to the period 1981 to 1983, when the fieldwork was conducted. However, the statistics for unemployment have been given for the period 1984 to 1985, when some of the school-leavers in this study were still searching for jobs.
- 6. Race classification in South Africa is carried out in terms of the **Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950**. This is the cornerstone of the whole system of apartheid since a person's political, civil, economic and social rights are determined by the race group to which he belongs.
- 7. Research into social-class influences in the Indian community is almost non-existent.
- 8. Social class is a highly ambiguous concept, and there are in fact many differences in the precise definition or classification employed in different studies (Reid, 1978: 13-49). However, the findings regarding life chances are consistent no matter which definition of social class is used. Middle-class children generally have better life chances than working-class children.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

Besides the school, the family is also known to exert considerable influence upon the career and educational choices of young people. Throughout their childhood the young are presented with occupational information by the family, as well as assessments of different types of employment. The importance of the family in any industrial society is its social context for the socialisation of children into the prevailing social norms and values. Such occupational socialisation within the family takes place mainly informally. The importance of the role of the family in occupational choice is adequately illustrated by Musgrave's (1974:102) explanation that parents are the main link between the family and the economic systems. Very often parents have roles in both systems and act as role models for their children.

In reviewing the importance of the family as a cultural producer of such occupational and educational information, this chapter discusses: the relevance of the social and cultural reproduction theories of Bernstein (1971) and Bourdieu (1974); the influence of social class, ethnicity and gender construction; and certain family typologies which research studies have highlighted. All of this is seen against the cultural background of the Indian family in South Africa, which is of special concern for the interpretation of the choices and decisions made by the students in this study.

A discussion on these aspects provides an understanding of some of the social and cultural differences which exist between the lower-working-class parents of the school-leavers and the middle-class parents of the tertiary education group in this study. The analysis in Part Two indicates the difference in the social and educational awareness of these two groups of parents, and how such a distribution of knowledge affected the ways in which the children from these different families were directed towards certain specific educational and career pathways. There is also an indication of how class culture,

and the construction of gender identities in these different groups are reproduced through experiences in the family, school, and place of work. The reproduction of class and gender points to the relationships which exist between family, school, work, and the structure of the wider society.

This kind of relational analysis has not been clearly stated in some of the early studies on the cultural influence of the family in orienting young people towards particular types of work. Some such studies include those of Jahoda (1952), Wilson (1953), Carter (1962), Douglas (1964), Douglas, Ross and Simpson (1968), and Thomas and Wetherall (1974). Even government reports such as that of Coleman *et al.* (1966) in the U.S.A., and the **Plowden Report** (Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education, England, 1967) failed to establish a critical relational analysis between the family, school, work, and the society at large. Instead, they tended to focus somewhat narrowly on home environment, and parental attitudes in particular.

#### 4.1 CULTURAL TRANSMISSION, PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION IN THE FAMILY

When considering socialisation into educational and occupational roles, the family may be regarded as an agency of cultural transmission, of cultural production and reproduction. Useful theories for focussing attention on these aspects, especially on the socialisation into family norms and values are those of Bernstein (1971a) and Bourdieu (1974). However, one of the major shortcomings of both these theorists is that they fail to locate their theories of cultural transmission and class relationships within an adequate ideological, economic, and political framework (Sharp, 1980:44-76). Despite such criticisms, the relevance of Bernstein's social and cultural reproduction theories to the present study is that they help to focus on the influence of the family on educational and career choices by examining the relationship between culture, structure and identity.

Though the writings of Bernstein are specifically concerned

with the relationship between forms of language, learning and thinking, and the different methods of upbringing of working-and middle-class children, his cultural transmission theories offer great insight into the influence of social class on parents and the educational and career aspirations of their children. One of the implications of this for the present study is that since education and occupation are linked, the characteristics of social class and economic level of the family should be seen in relation to the attitudes and expectations about work, as well as the type of jobs the students opt for. However, Bernstein's theories do not enable us easily to identify and describe the processes which result in such attitudes and expectations.<sup>1</sup>(p. 84)

It is also important to bear in mind that although his theories are concerned with the problem of educability, they are also concerned with the wider question of the relationships between symbolic orders and the social structure. For the purpose of this study, Bernstein's ideas were quite useful for an examination of the culture of the lower-working-class families of the school-leavers, in terms of their symbolic orders of meanings and the implications of this for their "careerless" pathways. His use of the concept of sociolinguistic code, for example, points to the social structuring of meanings, and highlights the form of social relationships which underlie the structuring of those meanings. By using this kind of approach, a clearer picture was obtained of the cultural climate of the families of the students in this study, and how they constructed specific interpretations of their educational and career choices.

The distinction which Bernstein makes between family types and their communication structures was valuable for analysing the differences in outlook between the working-class families of the school-leavers and the middle-class families of the tertiary education group in this study. As part of his development of a theory of social reproduction, Bernstein (1971b) presents two ideal types of family arrangements: **positional** and **person-oriented**. The positional family is one where there is a clear

separation of roles between members. In such a family the child is socialised within a clearly marked framework of authority. The authority structure is based upon clear-cut, unambiguous definitions of the status of the members of the family. The social identities of the members are strongly related to their age and sex - a ~~type~~ of family arrangement that is typical, not only of the lower working class in England, (which Bernstein discusses) but also of the traditional joint or extended family system of Indians in South Africa.

Bernstein's explanation is that in positional families the orders of meanings are largely **particularistic**, that is they are strongly tied to a local relationship and to a local social structure. The children of these families are socialised into relatively context-tied meanings, and in terms of educational and career choices this implies short-term or immediate goals. This is illustrated in the case of Ashton and Field's (1976) discussion of the careerless, short-term careers-oriented families. Most of the school-leavers in the present study come from families which are similar to Bernstein's positional family. They, too embarked upon "**careerless**" and "**short-term career**" pathways.

The person-centred family, on the other hand, is one where the child is seen in terms of his unique characteristics as a person. Ascribed status such as age and sex are not as important as personal characteristics. Bernstein argues that in this type of family arrangement which is typical of the middle class, the strength of the boundary maintaining procedures between family members is weak or flexible. Thus, the differentiation between members and the authority relationships are not as rigid as in the case of positional families. Further, in person-oriented families members would be creating their roles instead of merely stepping into them, as is the case with positional families. According to Bernstein, the culture of person-oriented families leads to the transmission of **universalistic** meanings. These are less tied to a given context, and children who are socialised into such forms can quite easily change the grounds

of their experience. The influence of such families often results in long-term career and educational plans, as in the case of the extended-careers family discussed by Ashton and Field (1976). This model was useful when analysing the aspirations for professional jobs, which were expressed by the middle-class students of the tertiary education group in the present study.

These aspects of Bernstein's theories can be selectively used along with those of Bourdieu to arrive at a comprehensive analysis of the influence of the family on the social construction of educational and career identities. Bourdieu's theory of the acquisition of **cultural capital** focuses attention on the practices of families from the different social classes, as well as those of schools.<sup>2</sup>(p. 84) He points to the advantages enjoyed by middle-class children for acquiring academic culture which the school then builds upon (Bourdieu, 1974:37-43). Bourdieu maintains that the effects of such cultural privilege are generally observed in relatively crude forms, such as : help with studies, extra teaching, information on the educational system, and job opportunities. Such middle-class families transmit to their children, indirectly rather than directly, a certain cultural capital and a certain ethos. For example, professional parents generally invest not only in their children's education but also in consumer goods which reflect the material and cultural characteristics of the bourgeois style of life. The children are socialised into a system of implicit values, which establishes their attitudes towards such cultural capital and towards education in general. Some of these tendencies were clearly seen in the case of professional families of the students in the tertiary education group in this study. In Bourdieu's terms, this group possesses the **habitus** which Kennett (1973:242) says is "**the system of modes of perception, of thinking, of appreciation and of action.**" On the other hand, the lack of cultural capital was particularly strong in the families of lower-working-class school-leavers, and to some extent in the upper-working-class families.

Bourdieu maintains that it is this kind of cultural heritage

through family upbringing which is the cause of great differences in the educational performance between children of different social classes. Through their family and educational experiences, the different classes are engaged in a symbolic struggle to impose the definition of the social world that is most consistent with their interests.

Despite the usefulness of the theories of both Bernstein and Bourdieu, the present study still needs some account of how families from the lower working classes and also from racially-discriminated groups interpret their unequal fates. It is necessary to ask how members of these groups understand their position in the social structure, and their role in reproduction. The analysis therefore incorporated an examination of some of the material, cultural and historical forces that structured the experiences of students from the different socio-economic groups, both at the institutional level and the daily level of family life. For example, it was necessary to examine the students' exposure to different types of knowledge and social practices in the context of prevailing ideologies.

Bernstein's theory of cultural transmission does not provide an explanation of ideology which takes into account material practice. It was essential to see what was the role of the ideology of modern, capitalist, apartheid society in the cultural reproduction process in which the students were involved. It was important to view the students as actors who were constituted, at least, partly within this ideology, and to view structures as mediated through ideology. It was also important to consider the role of the state in the maintenance of hegemonic ideology. The differences in the life-styles between the different social classes had to be seen as having been constituted, ideologically, politically, as well as economically. Bourdieu's theory, too, had to be extended if cultural capital was not going to be reduced simply to an explanation of **"cultural deprivation."**

This kind of analysis is an attempt at providing some understanding of how the students constructed their realities. The role of the family in occupational and educational socialisation was seen within a theory of cultural production and reproduction.



This examination of culture revealed how the families in their dialectical relationships with other institutions produced both stability and forms of resistance. This type of analysis is favoured by Giroux (1981:101) who says that:

"...we need to develop a relational analysis of society that uses critical categories such as class, ideology, and hegemony to expose how the interconnections among specific kinds of social practices, meanings, and institutions constitute the ideological and material character of a society steeped in domination."

#### 4.2 SOCIAL CLASS, ETHNICITY, GENDER AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

This kind of analysis of the family should be seen against the background of social-class differences, gender construction, and ethnicity. In the present study, all of these factors point to some marked differences in the distribution of knowledge between the working-class school-leavers and the middle-class students who proceeded to tertiary education. Such a distribution accounts for how these groups of people come to construct their realities. According to Bernstein's explanation this social distribution of knowledge indicates that it is mainly the middle class who are socialised into universalistic meanings; whereas the majority of the working class are socialised into knowledge at the level of context-tied operations.

This kind of distribution of knowledge, concerning the educational aspirations and job choices of the working-class families in this study accounted for the early school leaving of many of these students. Similar trends in early school leaving have also been revealed in the studies of Douglas, Ross and Simpson (1968), Jackson and Marsden (1962), and Floud, Halsey and Martin (1956). Bourdieu's explanation of these trends would probably be in terms of the attitudes of parents and children, and in particular their attitudes towards school. These are largely an expression of the system of explicit or implied class values. The middle class, for example, places greater emphasis on educational values since the school offers them reasonable chances of achieving what they aspire to. It is attitudes such as these

which are crucial in defining the chances of access to education, of accepting the values and norms of the school, and of using education as a means of mobility.

While all social-class groups in this study valued education highly, not all of them had the same depth of understanding of what the system had to offer, or of how to take advantage of this. The middle-class parents of both the school-leavers and the tertiary education group were clearly more knowledgeable in this respect than the parents of the working class. The lower-working-class parents in particular were placed at the greatest disadvantage.

Similar differences in class chances of education and job opportunities are also discussed by Ashton and Field (1976) who review the inter-connections between social-class background, education and occupation. They discuss how people from particular social classes develop class cultures; that is, values and norms which are considered to be appropriate to their class positions. Class cultures have important implications for the production and reproduction of meanings relevant to educational and job choices.

Ashton and Field are particularly interested in the experiences and perceptions of young people who enter work from three such class cultures, of which there are also examples in the present study. These include: the **careerless** who move from homes where parents are in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations into similar work levels; those whose parents are in skilled-manual work and who enter **short-term careers**; and those embarking on **extended careers** in non-manual work, who come from homes where such a pattern has already been established. The reproductive function of social class is evident in each of these family cultures. In the present study, the families of the lower-working-class school-leavers are much the same as the **"careerless."** The **"short-term careers"** may be equated to the families of the upper-working-class school-leavers; and the families of the tertiary education group are like those of the **"extended careers."** In each of

these three groups we get some idea of how social background with its attendant values inculcated by the family combines with school experiences to make entry into certain kinds of jobs as something which is taken for granted.

In a more recent account of the relationship between family, class and educational experience, Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) consider whether working-class culture prevents children from taking advantage of what the system has to offer. Though their answer is not entirely negative, they do, however, also demonstrate the part played by the class structure in providing sustained advantage to the highest social classes in relation to access to certain types of education beyond the secondary level.

A related aspect of social-class differences in values and attitudes concerning education and job choices is that of gender. In the present study, the typing of roles between the sexes was clear not only in the families, but also at school and work. Though this was evident in most families, it was especially glaring in the case of working-class homes. The fact of being a daughter rather than a son certainly affects parental attitudes in all social classes. For example, the **Early Leaving Report** (Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education, England, 1954:58) indicated that many parents, regardless of social class, attach more importance to their sons' education than to their daughters'. Generally, there is a belief among the working-class that a girl's job is a matter of secondary importance, because it is thought to be inevitable that she will soon marry. Accordingly, a daughter's choice of work is judged on different criteria from a son's. This view probably stems from the sexual division of labour in contemporary society and the ideological supports for that division of labour. A dual division of labour, class-divided and gender-divided operates at the levels of the school, work and family.

This theme has been taken up in several studies, including those with Marxist theoretical underpinnings, such as the Bowles

and Gintis study (1976:144). In their analysis of the family in modern, capitalist society they emphasise the fact that wives and mothers normally embrace their self-concepts as household workers. Such concepts are transmitted to their children through the differential sex role-typing of boys and girls within the family. Gender structuring of this kind was clearly seen in the present study in families which are similar to Ashton and Field's "careerless" and "short-term careers".

Together with social class and gender, ethnicity is yet another important variable of family life, which can explain young people's educational and career aspirations. The fact that this study deals with Indians in multi-racial South Africa makes ethnicity an important consideration. Almost the entire sample has a strong belief in the value of education. This seems to be a particular feature of Indians as a minority ethnic group.

The influence of ethnicity on educational and job choices is shown in the study by Allen (1975) on school-leavers in Bradford and Sheffield. She found that children with Polish or Indian parents were more likely to stay on in school than the children of the indigenous population or West Indian parents. In another study, Gupta (1977) found that Asian children have higher aspirations than their English counterparts. Unfortunately, such studies which can inform us of the importance of ethnic differences in the cultural production and reproduction of meanings have not yet been undertaken in South Africa. Such studies can provide us with some insight into how ethnicity affects the interpretations of educational and job choices.

#### 4.3 FAMILY TYPES

However, the answers to such questions about the distribution of knowledge in terms of class, gender and ethnicity are not always clear-cut. This is mainly due to the wide variations in the ways families are organised, and the resulting great differences in life-styles. In the present study, a range of

family types was observed, similar to those mentioned in British studies such as those of Veness (1962), Carter (1966), Klein (1965), and Ashton and Field (1976).

Some useful examples of family types which are relevant to the present study have already been discussed by Ashton and Field (1976). Their discussion of the careerless family is an example of a typical family of the lower working class (Ashton and Field, 1976:36). Other similar types are the **roughs**, discussed by Carter (1966:56), and the **tradition-directed** family discussed by Veness (1962:69). According to Bernstein's theory these are positional families which transmit particularistic meanings, and which restrict the children's visions to their immediate environment. According to Bourdieu, these families lack the necessary cultural capital.

Children from such families are the ones who make the transition from the lower streams of the state schools into semi-skilled and unskilled work. Their parents are usually in jobs with low levels of income. They have little formal education, and generally lack the knowledge and social skills necessary to advise their children about education and job choices. The lower-working-class school-leavers in this study came from such family backgrounds.

These families lived in poor, overcrowded conditions, in semi-detached council houses, garages and outbuildings. Their home life was centred around a much larger body of people than was the case with the small middle-class families of the tertiary education group. Such restricted living conditions inevitably focussed the parents' and children's attention on the immediate day-to-day problems of existence and precluded long-term planning. Children reared in this way live in a world of the immediate present where their attention is confined to the recurrent problems of making ends meet. They have few opportunities to consider the longer-term consequences of their actions. The parents of the lower-working-class students in the present study often referred to their poor economic and material circum-

stances when they explained why they wanted their children to follow certain careers. Their construction of meanings was influenced by their position in the economic structure of society. They found it difficult to understand what was meant by a good job, as defined by the school. Jobs were not recognised in terms of their intrinsic worth. For many of them, work was simply a means of earning money. It can therefore be said that they were partly responsible for channelling their children towards dead-end jobs.

A second broad classification of the family that was useful for analysing the data of this study was that of the **"short-term careers"** - orientated family (Ashton and Field, 1976:55) and the **solid working-class family**<sup>3</sup>(p. 84) (Carter, 1966:50). Once again, in respect of their symbolic orders and their structuring of meanings, these families, while they are not as restricted to their immediate environment as careerless families, nevertheless also display many of the characteristics of positional families. The upper-working-class school-leavers in the present study who became apprentices, tradesmen, and lower-category clerks and secretaries displayed characteristics similar to those of Ashton and Field's short-term careers family. These students entered occupations which offered short-term prospects, such as skilled-manual trades, technical occupations, and certain types of clerical and secretarial work. The majority of these young people came from families whose parents were engaged in such jobs, and this pointed to the reproductive functions of social class and the family. Like the careerless group, the market situation and work experiences of the parents of the short-term careers-orientated family influence family life significantly in matters of education and choice of career.

Ashton and Field state that these parents also face many difficulties, but unlike the careerless family, their income is regular, dependable, and sufficient to cover daily expenses. This regular income allows for a degree of short-term planning which is not possible in careerless families. Living in such circumstances means that the children can take account of the constraints

around which family life centres and plan their behaviour accordingly. Such planning is possible because of the greater material resources available to these families, and the greater freedom children are given by their parents.

Carter's **"solid working class"** family was also found to be valuable for an understanding of the career pathways of the upper-working-class school-leavers in the present study. Home life in the solid working-class family does not lead children to aspire to anything better than the ordinary, average jobs that their fathers, elder brothers and sisters, and the neighbours have. As in the case of Carter's study, the parents in the present research lacked the necessary knowledge about employment and education. Though they were not anti-school in their outlook, and wanted their children to attend school regularly and to be well behaved, these parents did not have any great insight into what the school offered, the choice of subjects, selection procedures, streaming patterns and so on. In this respect, they lacked the necessary cultural capital of middle-class families.

The third category that was used was that of the **"extended careers"** family (Ashton and Field, 1976:72). This is similar to the home-centred aspiring family (Carter, 1966:41). These are generally the middle-class families, but the upwardly mobile working-class family can also be included here. The students in the tertiary education group in the present study, who proceeded to full-time higher education with the intention of entering the professions, or managerial and administrative positions at a higher level, can be classified in this category.

These middle-class families have adequate financial resources which enable them to plan over a long range. These families can provide a suitable environment for the children to learn to explore the world. The parent-child relationships are also such that the children are encouraged to use their initiative in their relationships with others. According to Bernstein's theory, such children are much more likely to be responded to

because of their individual qualities. This fits his description of the person-oriented family where age and sex differences are not as important as they are in the working class.

Because of these social relationships, and the exposure to a range of universalistic meanings, the children of these families learn to relate to others not so much in terms of immediate rewards, but in terms of long-term rewards. This aspect of long-term planning is a distinctive feature of the way in which children come to view the world, and in particular long-term educational and career aspirations.

In respect of gender structuring, the roles of boys and girls are less clearly defined than they are in the careerless, and short-term careers-orientated families. As with other social classes, the differences in the roles between the sexes are also present. Nevertheless, it is in the middle classes that girls are given most freedom to choose and to explore. Compared with the careerless and the short-term careers-oriented families the parents of extended careers families possess a great deal of cultural capital. They have adequate knowledge and insight to give sound advice to their children on education and careers. They also know where and how to acquire relevant information, and are aware of the importance of subject and course choices, and selection procedures used for grading their children. They are ready to question the decision of the school if they feel that their children have been unfairly treated. The parents of the tertiary education group in this study displayed many of these characteristics.

#### 4.4 THE INDIAN FAMILY

When studying the construction of education and career pathways of the students in this study, one needs to be cautious in applying in a straightforward way the theories of Bernstein (1971c) or Bourdieu (1974), or the models of Ashton and Field (1976), Carter (1966), and Veness (1962). It is possible to find several variations of family types within the Indian community, depending upon how different facets of their culture



are interrelated. For example, though this study reveals examples of careerless, short-term careers, and extended careers families, within some of these categories we find both positional and person-oriented characteristics.

However, despite these differences it is still possible to speak of the Indian family type as being distinct from that of other racial groups in South Africa, even though the groups live under similar economic conditions in the same urban environment. Kuper (1960:96) says that the distinctive feature of the Indian urban family is its greater strength of joint family ties.<sup>4</sup>(p. 84) This is in comparison with African and White urban families.

It is important to consider this type of family arrangement in terms of its structuring of social relationships, its symbolic orders of meanings, and the kinds of knowledge which it makes available to its members. The career and educational decisions of both the school-leavers and those who embarked on tertiary education in this study were influenced not only by their parents, but also by older brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents and distant relatives.

Over the years, the traditional Indian joint family system in South Africa has been adapted to the social, political and economic conditions of a changing environment. Despite this adaptation, the joint family has influenced the attitudes and values of Indian South Africans to a significant degree. The idea of the joint or extended family system stems from the belief in the social arrangement of the kutum.<sup>5</sup>(p. 85) Whether his family is an extended or single unit, the average Indian is still firmly committed to certain norms of his kutum which includes all those with whom he can trace relationship through a common paternal grandfather or grandfather's brother (Meer, 1979:136). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that his view of the world will be influenced by experiences of such social relationships.

For example, despite adapting to the individualistic nature of western, urban life many Indians, still continue to see themselves as members of a kin group. Whereas, western urban tradition stresses the importance of individual achievement through educational success and occupational status, Indian tradition defines these achievements, at least to some extent with reference to the kin group. Meer (1979:137) stresses the fact that the average Indian, regardless of wealth, education or sophistication is possibly far more conscious of the larger kinship group that surrounds him than most urban people. There are several instances in this study which indicate how the students defined their ambitions within the context of the larger family unit. For example, several of the tertiary education students said that their parents and other relatives wanted them to become doctors, engineers, pharmacists and so on since this would bring prestige to the family.

The kutum arrangements of the Indian extended family reveal many of the characteristics of social relationships which are evident in positional, careerless and solid working-class family types. For example, socialisation within the extended family emphasises the importance of the clear separation of roles between the sexes, and of strict discipline and authority, especially in parent-child relationships. These characteristics were especially evident in the lower-working-class families of the school-leavers in this study.

In many of these families the roles of men and women are distinct, with women being subordinate to men. In the traditional Indian home, women's work is generally confined to domestic activities, and females are subject to the full range of both masculine as well as feminine authority. Men are considered to be the breadwinners, and are therefore allowed many liberties which are denied or forbidden to women. For example, preference is given to the education of boys, while girls are expected to leave school early in preparation for marriage. Men may mix widely and freely in society, while women must remain within the confines of the family circle. In this study, the activities

of male and female school-leavers, within and outside the family, show clear differences in the roles of the two sexes. The parents of the working-class school-leavers in particular tend to think of their daughters' careers as being of less importance.

Children reared in joint families are brought up strictly according to tradition, and where there is poverty and a low level of parental education the conditions are ideal for the production of particularistic meanings. Again this was clearly noticeable in the manner in which the lower-working-class parents of the school-leavers expressed short-term career aspirations for their children. This in turn influenced the educational and career choices of the children, which were more immediate and context bound. The behaviour of the educated and professional parents of the tertiary education group was also regulated to some extent by the norms and values of the extended family system.

Many of the characteristics of the typical joint or extended family no longer exist as it has been extremely difficult for this type of family to survive in its present form in the face of urbanisation and westernisation. During the last two to three decades Indian families have become increasingly nuclear in structure. In contrast with the extended family system, the authority patterns and the structuring of social relationships within the single family unit are those of relatively equal distribution of power between husband and wife, and parents and children. This is the typical middle-class, urban family, which is found in the professional and higher socio-economic groups in the Indian community. Several of the middle-class parents of the tertiary education group in this study fell into this category. They reflected many of the characteristics of the person-oriented and extended careers family types. The more intimate relationships between husbands and wives, and between parents and children, and the higher level of education of the parents create a cultural climate in which the universalistic production of meanings is possible. Nevertheless, the influence of the traditional joint family system

could also be seen. In many of these families traces of traditional lines of authority and distance could still be seen, though their intensity has decreased.

As in the case of the person-oriented family, children in these families were given greater freedom to explore, to express themselves freely, and to have some say in deciding on their future. This was due to the cultural ethos of these families, which also accounts for the fact that women play a less submissive role than in the joint family. With their increasing levels of education, young Indian women are demanding more power and equality. However, Meer (1979:140) says that even though they may share with the men the roles of breadwinners, they are never completely relieved of domestic responsibilities. Despite this, the greatest amount of freedom has been allowed to the Indian female in single family units. Many of the previous restrictions on the freedom of movement of girls have been gradually removed through the social relationships which have emerged in this type of family arrangement. For example, at one time daughters were severely restricted from entering fields of employment in which they would be in contact with the opposite sex. In recent years, this situation has changed. Such changes undoubtedly affected the ways in which girls in this study decided on their future education and career pathways.

However, it is not only the existence of the extended and the single unit family types which explains how Indian boys and girls come to construct their realities; there are also other distinguishing characteristics which influence value orientations. These include the educational level of parents, socio-economic differences, and religious and vernacular language affiliations. Within the Indian community we find parents of varying levels of education; social-class differences; Hindus, Moslems, Christians, Buddhists and Zoroastrians; Hindi, Tamils, Telegus and Gujerati.<sup>6</sup> (p. 85) Tables 4.1 and 4.2 (on page 78) indicate broad trends of the main religious and educational categories in the Indian community in South Africa. It is within this scene that a more complex set of groupings emerge. This was reflected in the case of class differences within the school-leaving and the tertiary education groups in this study.

TABLE 4.1

## DISTRIBUTION OF ASIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA ACCORDING TO RELIGION

RELIGION	NUMBER	PERCENT
Hindu	512 360	62.38
Islam	154 300	18.80
Christian	102 500	12.47
Other	12 220	1.49
Unspecified	39 940	4.86
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>821 320</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : **Population Census, 1980** (1982:118) Report No 02-80-02 Republic of South Africa. Pretoria.

TABLE 4.2LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF URBAN ASIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA BETWEEN  
THE AGES OF 35 TO 64

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	M A L E S		F E M A L E S	
	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Nil	5 040	5.98	26 680	30.24
Below Std 4	9 620	11.42	16 720	18.95
Stds 4 to 5	14 600	17.33	19 020	21.56
Stds 6 to 8	40 080	47.58	21 400	24.26
Stds 9 to 10	8 940	10.62	2 400	2.72
Post Std 10	4 880	5.79	820	0.93
Unspecified	1 080	1.28	1 180	1.34
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>84 240</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>88 220</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : **Population Census, 1980** (1982:251-53) Report No 02-80-02 Republic of South Africa. Pretoria.

Another important distinction between Indian families which explains differences in values and beliefs is that which continues to exist between passenger and indentured status Indians.<sup>7</sup>(p. 85) Though this distinction is basically a historical and economic one, the descendants of these two groups of settlers have differed in many ways which have significantly affected their life styles (Chetty, 1980:32). Except for a few students, the sample of the present study consisted mainly of descendants of the indentured group. Despite the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation, there are still clear differences between these groups in such matters as dress, mannerisms, diet, educational and career aspirations. The descendants of the passenger or non-indentured group are bound together by common economic interests. They are mainly Gujarati-speaking Moslems and some Hindus who see themselves as a commercial bourgeoisie, rather than as part of the working-class or peasantry in South Africa (Ginwala, 1979:6).

This group has retained many of its traditional customs; partly because its members suffered less disruption, and partly because they have been able to adhere more closely to their religious and cultural ethics. In their assimilation of western culture in South Africa, they have resisted many changes which have threatened some of their fundamental beliefs. For example, women have always been relegated to an inferior status, and changes in their roles have taken place very slowly. This is borne out by the fact that until recently the Moslem community, and Gujarati-speaking Hindus had reservations about allowing their daughters to proceed to higher education, or seek employment. In a study on the Indian élite, Hey (1961:17) says that educated Moslem and Hindu women, like many others with advanced education, are usually compelled by custom to play a submissive role. He also found that Moslem and Gujarati Hindu women sometimes assist with the family business, but rarely will they be found in the professions after marriage. Today, however, women from both groups have entered some of the higher professions.

The descendants of the indentured group consist mainly of Hindi, Tamils, Telegus, and Christians. Many of the present generation of Indian Christians are descendants of Hindu indentured families. The main drive for western education came from the descendants of the indentured group because of the different beliefs they subscribed to. They have a profound faith in the value of western education and see it as a means of overcoming economic difficulties. The sample in this study reflected this trend most clearly. Though they are not as conservative as the passenger group, the Hindi, Tamil and Telegu groups still cling to certain traditional beliefs, especially those concerning the role of women in society.

The clearly differentiated roles between men and women, and the subordinate position of women especially in the extended family help us to understand why many parents in the present study thought of their daughters' careers as being less important than their sons'. The criteria which they used were different from those by which they judged the careers of their sons.

Another factor which the parents in this study referred to frequently was their struggle against poverty, and their desire for their children to escape a similar fate by educating themselves in preparation for good jobs. Several studies such as those of Gopaulsingh (1960), Ramphal (1961), Bughwan (1970), Maasdorp (1968), Pillay and Ellison (1969), and the recent housing survey undertaken by Butler-Adam and Venter (1982) of the Institute of Social and Economic Research of the University of Durban-Westville have stressed the poor socio-economic status of Indians. Amongst other things, they emphasise factors such as poverty, low educational level of parents, overcrowding, and large families. In the present study, the homes of several students, especially those from the lower working class were characterised by these conditions. Studies conducted by the Department of Economics of the University of Natal have used an index called the **Poverty Datum Line** to emphasise the large-scale poverty amongst Indians in Durban. Consequently it is important to have some understanding of how such poverty affects

the social distribution of knowledge in these families, and how this affects the ways in which youngsters come to interpret their educational and job opportunities.

While many Indians live in such conditions, it should also be mentioned that there is a small sector of the community which is quite affluent. These include many former working-class families which have achieved professional status, and many from the middle-and upper-business sectors. The cultural ethos of these families differs significantly from that of poorer families. Parents are usually well educated and possess the necessary cultural capital to advise their children about careers which they consider to be worthwhile. Many of the parents of the tertiary education group in the present study fell into this category. Those who do not have the educational background have the necessary contacts from whom advice may be sought. The parents encourage their children to pursue careers like medicine, engineering, pharmacy, and the law and to break into new careers which have not traditionally been followed by Indians in South Africa. They have the means to invest in their children's education, and some even send their children overseas to pursue courses not available in South Africa. These families with financial backing have been able to provide their children with lengthy periods of education to enable them to acquire degrees and symbols of achievement.

The students in this study came from a variety of neighbourhood conditions. Those who had long-term aspirations lived in neat suburban middle-class areas. In this group, there were also some middle-class and upper-working-class students who lived in sub-economic, semi-detached council houses which were extended, renovated, and made comfortable by their families. However, those who revealed many of the characteristics of short-term careers orientation also lived in sub-economic council houses, but in deprived, poverty-stricken and overcrowded conditions. Their families were not in a position to extend or renovate these houses. Some of these students who preferred short-term



careers also lived in low-cost, privately-owned company cottages, outbuildings and garages. This group included many lower-working-class and some upper-working-class students.

#### 4.5 CONCLUSION

We have seen how parents' attitudes and expectations about work, and the processes which result in such attitudes and expectations, are closely related to the family's position in the existing social structure. For example, the great differences in the cultural resources available to the different types of families mentioned by Bernstein, Ashton and Field, and Bourdieu point to the marked differences in the distribution of knowledge between the lower working class and the middle class. These differences in knowledge distribution, in turn, result in different kinds of educational expectations and job choices for the children reared in these families. The social distribution of knowledge is also related to the wide variations in the ways that families are organised, and the great differences in their life-styles.

The crucial question that arises is the extent to which parents are knowledgeable about the way schooling benefits them. The answer to this question must take into account the parents' understanding of their lives outside the school system. This means that a critical relational analysis must be established between family, school, work and the wider society. The influence of the family has to be located within an adequate ideological, economic and political framework, if the relationship between culture, structure and identity is to be firmly grasped.

An examination of the influence of the family within ideology and structures enables us to get some idea of the pre-conditions for social action. Structures determine the alternatives and choices which are available to actors. Family members may act knowledgeably within the constraints imposed by structures, but they may also act in ignorance. Because of their lack of knowledge about the working of the school system, and the avail-

ability of jobs, their particular actions can result in unintended consequences. For example, this chapter has discussed how lower-working-class parents are uninformed about their children's school progress and future careers, and how this reinforces their children's low social status. The parents contribute to this state of social inequality, though this is not what they intend.

# NOTES

1. While Bernstein offers some clear hints and indications about processes in social-class experiences, his analysis also suffers from the same kind of one-sidedness as that of Bourdieu. In a review of Bernstein's theories, Willis (1983:123) says "the economy, and its implicitly empty places, stands silently waiting for the gift of whatever educational process however understood. They-the 'empty' places developed in Bernstein's case ... are not themselves the product of the struggle of constituted acting classes. We are also presented with only the pristine simplicity of one form of domination, class, with no mention of Patriarchal and race domination and, how, at least aspects of their ideological forms may intersect with class."
2. The essence of the Bourdieuan educational theory can be criticised on similar grounds to those of Bernstein. Willis (1983:119) says that even at its strongest, this theory does not make explicit the idea of cultural production. Thus, it is finally reduced to a traditional socialisation model. See also note 11 of Chapter Two (on page 36).
3. The short-term careers-orientated family, and the solid working-class family are by no means identical. However, since they show certain similarities they have been grouped together for the purpose of this discussion.
4. Lever (1978:49) discusses the strength of the Indian joint family by citing the study of Kark and Chesler (1956:134-59) in Durban of Africans and Indians who lived near each other in four neighbourhoods. Though the Africans had higher incomes and less overcrowding than the Indians, their rates for stillbirths and infant mortality were higher. This difference is explained in terms of the traditional methods of confinement, infant feeding and child care derived from the villages of India. These appeared to be more adaptable to urban conditions than the habits of Africans acquired from tribal life.

5. Meer (1979:134) says that the kutum is a kinship system of several nuclear families hierarchically arranged by male seniority. This includes a male head, his wife, unmarried children, unmarried brothers and sisters, younger married brothers, married sons, and brothers' married sons and their wives and children (Kuper, 1960:97). The number of kutum members living at any particular time varies from a couple of individuals to over a hundred. However, within the kutum, the closest unit is that of parents, children, daughters-in-law and parental grandchildren.
6. Each of the religious groups has its own vernacular linguistic origins. Most Hindus in South Africa belong to the Hindi, Tamil, Telegu and Gujarati vernacular language groups. Muslims include Urdu, Gujarati and Kutchi vernacular groups.
7. The distinction between families of passenger and indentured origins is not simply one according to which pure types can be classified. Chetty (1980:34) says that some studies reveal that the extended family is more common among the passenger group, whilst there are others which indicate that the incidence is also high amongst the descendants of the indentured group. Both groups also have parents of varying levels of education, and the professional élite is found in both sectors. However, the passenger group is more affluent.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION

#### 5.1 THE SCHOOL AS A SITE FOR STRUGGLE

Although people associate education with very lofty ideals, in practice it is closely associated with the preparation for employment. Society expects that schools will develop in young people the knowledge, attitudes and skills which will enable them to contribute to the economy. However, the relationship between school and work is not as straightforward as this. The present chapter therefore seeks to explore some of the complexities involved in the process of education as students make the transition from school to adult life.

In this study, these complexities are reflected through the experiences of students in both the ordinary and practical grades in respect of race, class and gender. However, the students' educational and career choices and decisions stem not only from these experiences in school, but also from their position within the socio-economic and political framework of the wider society. The tensions and struggles which they experience are a product of the relationship between the construction of their educational and career identities and the structure in which they find themselves.

Therefore it is inadequate to see the process of education in school as being merely subjected to the external pressures of the economy or the state. This would be a mechanistic approach which accepts as unproblematic the assumption that schools merely transmit the dominant culture.

Students are often involved in struggles, tensions and resolving contradictions; these can be examined by looking at the school as a site for struggle. This approach was used in studies such as those of Willis (1977), Everhart (1979) and McRobbie (1978). They examined struggles, tensions, and contradictions by employing a relational analysis of the education, economic, political and cultural spheres, and by examining the roles of ideology and hegemony.

In the light of some of the tensions experienced by the students in this study, especially in situations such as career-counselling, it is useful to analyse their experiences of schooling through the interpretive and neo-Marxist approaches to see how culture is produced through contradictions based on contestation and struggle (Apple, 1982a:26). The nature of such struggle was evident when the students sometimes acted in ways that contradicted the values of the school. This was apparent during the observation of general lessons in the curriculum, the career lessons, counselling sessions, and during discussions held when home visits were made. An attempt was therefore made to relate identity to structure by finding out on what meanings and values students, teachers and parents acted. This required a combination of what Apple (1982a:94) called **"a socio-economic approach to catch the structural phenomena and what might be called a cultural program of analysis to catch the level of everydayness."**

This involved an examination of a very complex process of how people go through schools, and experience the influences of schooling. The two perspectives used to analyse this process are the interpretive and neo-Marxist perspectives. Both suggest a close scrutiny of certain analytical categories such as reproduction, resistance, the labelling process, the influence of careers-guidance lessons, and the production and consumption of knowledge. In addition, race, class, gender, and the pedagogic relationships between teachers and students were found to be other useful categories for classifying the empirical data.

## 5.2 REPRODUCTION AND CONTESTATION

This dual approach of looking at structure, as well as the experiences of everyday living focuses attention on the reproductive nature of schooling, especially on the ways in which cultural forms and social practices are continuous with the relations of domination in capitalist society. Though this is not a major concern of the present study, there are nevertheless certain specific issues such as those of race, class and gender which

illustrate how these affect the students' acceptance, as well as resistance of their roles and positions in a fundamentally unequal society. Studies such as those of Bourdieu (1974), Bernstein (1971d) and Apple (1982b) show how such inequality is rooted and reproduced by the economic, political and ideological forms which currently exist. The fact that this study deals with students of both sexes, from different social classes, and from a minority race group, points to the relevance of these issues in an attempt to understand how they responded to the ideological and cultural messages presented to them in school.

An oversimplified picture of reproduction and resistance is avoided. This kind of weakness is present in the theories of Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Althusser (1977) which portrayed pupils as passive recipients of messages built into the structure and content of schooling. Such an approach presents an oversocialized model of schooling; and does not offer much scope for exploring the contradictions which are inherent in the process of schooling, or analysing the struggles experienced by the students.

The tensions experienced by the students in this study, and their rejection of certain values of the school are evident in their reactions to the system of grading and streaming, examinations and testing, and the career-counselling programme. Such tensions and struggles often point to the properties of knowledge which, according to Bernstein (1971d), reflect the political nature of schooling.<sup>1</sup> (p.104) In the ordering, structuring and hierarchization of knowledge, schools appear to support and maintain the social system. This is very clear in the case of the curriculum provision and the teachers' perceptions of students' abilities in both the ordinary and practical grades.

However, schools do not merely reproduce culture; nor are students just moulded to fit willingly into an unequal society. They are not passive internalizers of pre-given social messages. On the contrary, their decisions and choices are often based

on their own cultural forms. The faith which most students in this study seem to have in education stems from their experiences in the family and Indian community life in general. On the other hand, some of their doubts and anxieties about the value and relevance of education for improvement of their life chances may stem from changing social conditions in Indian life, and from their minority status in the South African stratification system.

According to Willis (1983) such cultural forms are a result of struggle, contestation, and partial penetration of macro structures. Students act in contradictory ways that can support reproduction and also partially penetrate it. Reproduction and contestation go hand in hand. One cannot therefore be sure that schools are always successful in reproduction.

### 5.3 AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF SCHOOLING

The contestation and struggles of the students as reflected in the process of education can best be captured through interpretive approaches, especially symbolic interactionism and social phenomenology. However, if identity is to be related to structure, these theoretical approaches which emphasise the identification of meanings embedded in actions (Blumer, 1969) could be used in combination with neo-Marxist approaches (Apple, 1982a). Many aspects of the attitudes and behaviour of the students in this study could be analysed through this integrated approach. In particular, this would include their responses to organisational arrangements such as streaming, and the process of subject and occupational choice.

Such an interpretive analysis should of course take into account the fact that choices are not necessarily made in a straightforward way. For example, Furlong (1976) and Delamont (1976) indicate that students do not simply respond mechanically to the demands made on them in school; nor do they conform all the time to the attributes of any single general adaptation. There is sufficient evidence in the present study to show that a student's choice is directed by a variety of meanings constructed in the process of interaction with teachers, guidance counsellors, peers and others.



Another aspect of this kind of interpretive analysis which has to be considered is the nature of the power relationships operating at the micro level of the classrooms, as well as in the wider society. Some interpretive studies which took account of both the micro and the macro dimensions of power are those of Willis (1977) and Corrigan (1979). In the present study, the relevance of this can be seen at the micro level in the power which teachers have to assess and grade students; and at the macro level the influence of the economy, the political system, and the stratification of the wider society on the choices of the students.

By adopting this approach it is possible to examine how teachers and students are producers as well as consumers of knowledge. The knowledge which was produced and the social relationships which emerged in both the ordinary and practical grade classes in this study may be regarded as different kinds of social constructs that are constantly negotiated, re-defined, and challenged by both teachers and pupils.<sup>2</sup>(p. 104)

Such an interpretive analysis of power relationships in the school involves a close study of the selection mechanisms which are used to allocate students to different courses of study. Educational knowledge which is contained in the school curriculum is distributed along a number of different educational routes. Young (1971a:25) says that, in schools, this process takes place within - and is affected by - a system of power relationships which controls both the selection and the transmission of knowledge, and this ultimately affects the pupil's occupational status.

As in most western educational systems the secondary school curriculum in Indian schools in South Africa also aims at the development and application of techniques to identify potentially talented students in the educational process. The application of selection procedures and the effects which these have on the students are reflected in their attempts to find jobs, and to enter tertiary education.

During the period when this study was conducted students were selected and allocated to either the ordinary (academic) or practical courses of study, on the basis of their performance in the standard-five school examination. The assumption underlying this type of meritocratic selection is that there will be equality of educational opportunities for all pupils. It is an education "... designed to ensure that children get the education that suits their skills, interests, abilities and aptitudes ... this new system is designed to ensure the efficient use of our resources of manpower in the national interest." (Krog, 1972:18). The policy-makers have been greatly concerned about the fact that pupils who are unable to benefit from the **normal** educational programme are directed towards a more practical and vocationally-orientated course.

However, the trends which have emerged in Indian education prompt one to ask whether this arrangement has provided an adequate escalator for students to achieve social and occupational mobility. There is no doubt that there has been an increase in the percentage of students who stay on till standard ten. Table 5.1 (on page 92) reflects this percentage increase for the period 1970-81.

However, it is disturbing to note that an unusually large number of these pupils were placed in the practical grade courses. Naidoo (1979:78), for example, points out that about 37 per cent of pupils in standards 5, 6 and 7 are in the practical grade course and this increases in the higher standards.

Another disturbing feature is that the majority of the pupils who are in the ordinary grade course eventually obtain a Senior Certificate pass rather than a Matriculation Exemption pass. This trend is reflected in table 5.2 (on page 92).

TABLE 5.1

PROGRESS OF INDIAN PUPILS FROM STANDARDS 6 TO 10, 1970-1981  
PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS REACHING STANDARD 10

YEAR	STD 6	STD 7	STD 8	STD 9	STD 10
1970	100				
1971	100	81.8			
1972	100	73.5	65.7		
1973	100	81.9	61.3	46.9	
1974	100	93.2	64.0	46.4	32.4
1975	100	93.4	83.3	35.7	28.4
1976	100	95.7	99.2	40.9	25.3
1977	100	95.7	103.2	51.5	30.8
1978	100	97.5	91.0	78.3	40.7
1979	100	96.5	95.2	66.4	59.7
1980	100	97.0	94.9	67.8	52.7
1981	100	96.3	91.8	70.7	51.6

Source : 1982 South African Statistics. Compiled by Department of  
Statistics, Pretoria : 5.30

TABLE 5.2

MATRICULATION EXAMINATION RESULTS 1981-1983

	1981		1982		1983	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Passed with Matriculation Exemption	2335	39.00	2411	37.1	3290	40.3
Passed with Senior Certificate	2734	45.7	3042	46.9	3660	44.9
Failed	917	15.3	1039	16.0	1203	14.8
TOTAL	5986	100	6492	100	8153	100

Sources : 1. Cooper, C. et al. (1984) Survey of Race Relations in  
South Africa 1983. Johannesburg : SAIRR : 447.

2. Cooper, C. et al. (1985) **Race Relations Survey 1984**. Johannesburg : SAIRR : 678.
3. Randall, P. (ed.) (1983) **Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1982**. Johannesburg : SAIRR : 487.

When seen against this background one is able to understand why the two schools in which this study was conducted attached a great deal of importance to achieving good examination results. They used strict selection procedures to separate those students whom the teachers saw as capable of success in these examinations from those who were not deemed to be capable of such success. This was one of the main distinctions which teachers made between those who followed the ordinary and practical grade courses. The best resources in both schools were also concentrated on those students who were regarded as **successful** material, and especially those who were groomed for entry into tertiary education.

Though many of the practical grade students saw the value of education for opportunities in life, they viewed with suspicion the way in which school resources were distributed. The allocation of certain students to the ordinary grade not only virtually guarantees their access to the higher-status occupations, but also has an important effect on how they see themselves and their future.

Besides looking at the effects of selection procedures on the students' perceptions, it is also important to see how students from the two streams are labelled.<sup>3(p.104)</sup> The students in both the ordinary and practical grades were defined in particular ways. Using labels such as **bright, dull, university material, office worker, or factory worker**, the teachers often predicted the examination results, jobs, and tertiary educational pathways of the students. Much of the teachers' interactions with the students were also influenced by such definitions or labels. Often they gave more encouragement to those whom they saw as bright - who were likely to enter a tertiary education institution.

The labelling process was clearly evident in the counselling sessions in both schools where the counsellors often perceived the students in terms of social characteristics when making predictions about job choices and educational pathways. Just as in the study by Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963), it was found that the counsellors often used non-academic criteria when classifying students' abilities. They referred to such things as : appearance, manner and demeanour, assessments of the parents, and reports from other teachers on social characteristics.

The effects of selection mechanisms used, as well as the labelling process, have important implications for the social structuring of the students' identities, and can be seen as the beginnings of institutionalization of social selection for the stratification of society. Early success and failure in school is of crucial importance for entry into the occupational structure. Thus, the tensions and struggles experienced by students in constructing their educational and career pathways often reflect the relationships which they have had with their teachers, and the role of the teachers in the social structuring of students' identities (Sharp and Green, 1975:33).

#### 5.4 CLASSIFICATION OF CLASSROOM KNOWLEDGE, AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Closely related to selection mechanisms and the labelling process is the organisation of knowledge and the nature of pedagogic relationships between teachers and pupils. The social organisation of the school curriculum for the ordinary and practical grades can be examined in terms of Bernstein's (1971d) notions of **classification** and **framing**. This concerns the relationship between subjects and the ways in which teaching and learning are organised.<sup>4</sup>(p. 104)

Generally, the organisation of the curriculum in both of the schools in this study may be regarded as collection codes, according to Bernstein's definition. The teaching methods in both schools were traditional and subjects were timetabled

and taught separately. Bernstein's framework can be used to study how the students' exposure to different packages of knowledge are linked with their decisions to follow certain educational and career routes. This also enables us to understand how the social order is reproduced through categories such as gender, class and race - by examining the relationship between knowledge and class, race and gender codes.

Keddie (1971), for example, demonstrated this in respect of social class by looking at how knowledge is structured and the forms of pedagogy which teachers favour in the case of pupils who were streamed according to ability. She found that pupils from high-status, white-collar backgrounds were more likely to be placed in the upper streams, and those from semi-skilled and unskilled-manual backgrounds in the lower streams. Teachers generally modified their subject matter and methods according to the stream they were teaching. There was a tendency, for example, to withhold **high-status** knowledge from pupils in the lower streams. This in turn made it impossible for many of these pupils to gain admission to tertiary education institutions and high-status jobs.

Similar observations were made in respect of teachers' perceptions of knowledge and teaching methods for the ordinary and practical grade students in this study. Teachers often commented on the inability of practical grade students to cope with higher grade knowledge. This trend was still apparent even when the new lower grade subjects were introduced in 1983, as a replacement for the practical grade course. Teachers seemed to match appropriate knowledge with appropriate students, and this seemed to have an effect on the students' educational and career choices.

These aspects are relevant not only to social class, but also to gender. Deem (1980a:1), for example, discusses the use of this theoretical framework to investigate the ways in which schooling transmits a specific gender code through which an individual's identity and roles are constructed under the school's knowledge classification system. In both schools the counsellors

seemed to use a gender code when differentiating between male and female careers. There were times when they appeared to create distinct boundaries between certain activities, interests, and expectations of future work for the two sexes.

Such differences in the perceptions of teachers between gender appropriate subjects may give rise to contrasting educational achievements between the sexes and prepare each for different life-styles. Deem (1980a:1) says that such classifications of knowledge structure the actions, beliefs, values and life chances of women and provide them with a set of contradictions about their role in society.

Another area of the classification of knowledge which has some relevance to this study is that of the racial code. The students were aware of the principles of race classification operating in Indian schools, and sometimes raised questions about the division of schools based upon race. The real impact was felt when some of them left school and looked for jobs. They were then confronted with the racial division of labour, and the realities of the labour market.

The classification of knowledge, and the racial and gender codes indicate that in addition to the official, formal curriculum the school relies heavily on a number of taken-for-granted "rules" contained within the hidden curriculum (Snyder, 1971; Jackson, 1968). This aspect of the curriculum teaches the children about the society they live in : its values, its rules and its power structures. For example, children pick up impressions and attitudes concerning the distinction between mental and manual labour; the gender, racial and class divisions in society; and the values of capitalism.

Therefore, it may be said that schools teach more than the content of knowledge that is set out in the formal curriculum. They also teach a whole range of attitudes, values and assumptions which prepare the students for their entry into the wider society. For example, the hidden curriculum in schools in South

Africa reflects the nature of an unequal society based on racial, class and gender divisions. It reflects the power relationships, the structures and social relations of the society.

These notions of the classification and framing of educational knowledge, and also of the hidden curriculum, were useful for analysing the ways in which the students in this study made the transition from school. When studying the educational and career pathways of students, the impact of the processes of class, race, and gender reproduction in schooling can be related to the processes of reproduction in the labour market, in the family, and in other areas of the students' lives (Deem, 1980a:8). When seen in this light, curriculum provision in school may be regarded as the product of struggle between groups which promote different subjects or different conceptions of a particular subject. This is reflected in the different interpretations which male and female students from different class backgrounds, and from the two grades gave to particular subjects. Hammer-sley and Woods (1976:2) say that the status hierarchy of subjects reflects the status legitimations of the most powerful forces in society.

#### 5.5 ORIENTATION TOWARDS CAREERS

The construction of educational and career routes are affected not only by the general curriculum issues already discussed, but also by the deliberate efforts of careers education. This deals with the specific help given to students during careers lessons and career-counselling sessions so that they can understand the world of employment, and will be prepared for the choices they will have to make. Some of the broad aims of careers orientation, as listed by Watts (1983:11) were adopted by both schools. They included:

- (a) the attempts to make the students aware of opportunities in the world of work, and the working conditions;
- (b) rewards associated with certain kinds of work;
- (c) an awareness of one's distinct values and interests when choosing jobs.



It was mainly in these three areas that conflicts often arose between the counsellors' interpretations of what is **good** for the students, and the students' own preferences. This was especially noticeable in the cases of those who were unemployed on leaving school, and those who were content to settle for jobs which were outside their range of preferences.

Conflicts such as these make it necessary to analyse critically the notion that careers education does help students to make rational choices when they are deciding on jobs. The struggles experienced by the jobseekers in this study seem to support the argument of Roberts (1980) that students have very limited choices. In reality, their lives are largely determined by the opportunity structure, and many people have to settle for whatever jobs are available.

Contradictions and tensions were noticeable when the students and their counsellors and careers teachers were involved in discussions. The power and authority exercised by teachers and counsellors, and the resistance of the students were noticed when students were placed in ability groups. Though placement into ability groups in both schools rested mainly on examination and test results, the counsellors' and teachers' interpretations of students' performances also played an important part. The counsellors at both schools preferred to use official procedures like cumulative record cards, interest, aptitude and IQ test scores when making their assessments.

Those who were in the ordinary grade and who were performing well had little difficulty in coming to terms with the counsellors' interpretations based on these criteria. But those who did not perform well, and who were mostly in the practical grades, experienced many conflicts in trying to come to terms with the advice given to them. The students had to negotiate and interpret such advice against the background of the power and authority of the school's counselling system, as well as the experiences of their own cultural backgrounds.

When the careers and counselling programme is examined in this light, it is clear that the development and application of techniques for identifying potentially talented students early in the educational process reflected not only the power dimension of the nature of the struggle between students and staff, but also the increasing specialisation which characterises the occupational structure in modern industrial society.

#### 5.6 SOCIALISATION PROCESS WITHIN SCHOOLS AS A PREPARATION FOR WORK

As a result of their socialisation experiences in the different grades in which they were placed, and within the school's careers and counselling programmes, the students came to see their abilities and their future careers in particular ways. For example, most of those in the ordinary grade, who were preparing to enter tertiary education, came to see themselves as possessing superior abilities, and valued the importance of obtaining good examination results because of their long-term career goals.

The importance of **moving ahead** was also very much a part of the consciousness of those who aimed for careers in the middle range, such as the skilled-manual trades, technical occupations, and secretarial work. This included students from both the ordinary and practical grades, who saw the need for at least some education, though they realised that this might limit their chances of advancement beyond a certain level.

There are also those practical grade students who, though professing some interest in education, left school early. They took on jobs which they considered to be very routine, which offered little or no hope of advancement. According to Ashton and Field (1976) these are careerless jobs. Though some of these students adopted a positive attitude towards school and work, many of them did not see themselves as being successful. This is consistent with the negative pictures that teachers generally had of them, and the derogatory messages which were transmitted to them in school.

Within the context of the culture of the schools these three groups of children are differently socialised. Those who are in the upper streams, and who come from more favourable home backgrounds seem to be at an advantage. This can be linked with the argument of Bourdieu (1974) who sees the school essentially as a conservative force which obstructs the social mobility of the lower classes. Bourdieu says that the middle classes possess the necessary cultural capital which influences their access to and their achievement in schools. His argument is that the school, while ostensibly fair and meritocratic, does not really offer everyone an equal chance. In the present study, it is quite clear that the middle-and upper-working-class students appear to appreciate more readily what the school has to offer, and to be able to benefit from it. According to Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980:7) such differences in the students' cultural backgrounds, which are reinforced by school experiences, indicate that while the educational system may appear to be nominally universalistic, in reality it is particularistic.

The effects of such socialisation can be seen in the way in which the two schools are organised into academic streams. Though the students in both the ordinary and practical grades were conscious of the importance of education for the improvement of life chances, a greater academic orientation was found with the ordinary grade students. This observation is similar to that of Hargreaves (1967) who found that in streamed schools, pupils in the higher academic streams developed a deeper academic culture. However, in the present study, unlike that of Hargreaves, the students in the lower streams did not develop strong forms of counter-culture.

Therefore, when analysing the cultural forms of these students one should be careful not to use the cultural capital theory in an over-deterministic way. There is hardly any evidence in this study, for example, to support Bowles and Gintis's (1976) assertion that the structure and social relations of education accurately reflect and reproduce the structure and social relations of the workplace. Though the students displayed

certain tendencies at school, which may be associated with the jobs that they entered, it is difficult to say whether their attitudes and behaviour were consonant with their likely future levels of participation in the labour force.

Instead, the process of socialisation in school should be seen as a complex and dynamic one, as illustrated in Willis's description of the **lads'** willing entry into unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. However, the students in the present study, who took similar jobs did so rather unwillingly. Nevertheless, the complexities in the socialisation process are evident here too. They were often doubts, acceptance, rejection and even coercion which characterised the students' decisions and choices. Thus, the socialisation process is not straightforward, where one is able to work on the assumption that there is a direct connection between experience in school and entry into work.

Within the context of the cultural theory, it is important to consider the insights which the students have into the nature of the macro society, its ideologies, and how they try to reconcile these with their personal decisions when making choices. Willis (1977), for example, discusses how the lads, in rejecting the culture of the school, adopted particular attitudes to gender, race and work. In the present study, too, the specific cultural forms of the students can be linked with Indian culture in general, the culture of the wider South African society, and the culture of their families and neighbourhoods.

When such cultural forms are studied critically in an attempt to understand the social construction of the students' educational and career pathways, it is clear that schools do not simply reproduce the values and social relations of the workplace in a straightforward way. Any analysis of the socialisation process in school must take account of the tensions and the struggles which the students experience. This approach allows for a dynamic, as opposed to a static interpretation of the nature of the reproductive processes of schooling.

## 5.7 CONCLUSION

Of the many aspects of the process of education discussed in this chapter, some are particularly important for an understanding of the cultural forms adopted by the students in the construction of their educational and career identities. These include the concepts of struggle, reproduction, contestation, power, labelling, cultural capital, and classification and framing of educational knowledge. When explained through an active notion of culture, these concepts may be used in various combinations to discuss how students from different social backgrounds have to contend with the culture of the school in making their transition to adult life. These concepts are also valuable for an understanding of how students become active constructors of their educational and career identities; rather than passive recipients of the school's message systems. But in relating structure to identity the maximum value of these concepts is derived by focussing on the students' range of actions and meanings within the structural influences of the school and the wider society.

Hence, this chapter has argued for the use of interpretive theories in combination with neo-Marxist approaches for a cultural analysis of educational and career pathways by looking at : the system of academic streaming in schools, the selection mechanisms and labelling processes, the production and consumption of knowledge, race, class and gender codes, pedagogic relationships between teachers and students, and the specific influences of the careers and counselling programmes. Within the context of the transitional process, an examination of these areas helps to explore the school as a site for struggle.

However, in constructing their educational and career pathways the school is not the only site of struggle. A number of other complex interconnections, such as those with the family and place of work, will have to be made to observe the role of the educational system in reproducing a labour force stratified by race, class and gender. This is necessary because the cultural

reproduction of education is not confined to the formal institution of the school. The cultural apparatus of society is much broader than this. We need to understand other aspects of a society's modes of dominant culture if we are to understand fully how education and reproduction are linked beyond the classroom.

# NOTES

1. Bernstein (1971d:67) discusses how the political nature of schooling can be observed in the principles that structure the message systems inherent in the content of school knowledge. The school system reflects the general system of inequalities in the wider society.
2. Giroux (1981:12) says that such social constructions are tied to the interests, perceptions and experiences of those who produce and negotiate particular meanings. This can be seen in this study in the way the students are assessed, labelled, and advised to follow particular educational and career pathways, and in some of the ways in which they challenge this.
3. The effects of teachers' labelling of students are that they often lead to a set of expectations that teachers have of students. It has also been said that students fulfil the prophecies of their teachers. These ideas are drawn from a larger theoretical perspective called labelling theory, which is related to the interactionist perspective. Among the major contributors to the development of this theory are Becker (1964), Douglas (1972), and Matza (1964). Within the context of the present study, the labelling theory is useful to explore **"who gets what in education."** This theory enables us to study how students react to the labels given to them, and how such labels affect the options which are available to them at school.
4. **Classification** refers to the degree of boundary maintenance between subjects, and **framing** refers to **"the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation, and pacing of knowledge received in the pedagogical relationship."** (Bernstein, 1971d:49-50).

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. THE WORLD OF WORK

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The transition into work is tied up with experiences such as those of the school, the home, peer group and neighbourhood. Studies such as those of Ashton and Field (1976:12), and Keil and Newton (1980:98) have shown that the previous experience of young people in the home, school and peer group prepares them to fit in with and adjust to the demands which they face at work.

It is against a background of such interrelationships that the present chapter attempts to construct a framework within which the students' career routes may be studied. Aspects such as labour market segmentation, the entry into work and choice of jobs, working conditions and work experiences, and the production and reproduction of culture through work are discussed by relating personal identity to social structure. The emphasis is on how young school-leavers construct their occupational identities within the structures of the world of work.

Several studies on the transition into work have concentrated on these categories because:

- (a) The perceptions and experiences of work are affected by the way in which the labour market is stratified. Work is experienced differently in different segments of the labour market.
- (b) It is during the period of entry into work that factors such as perceptions of young workers by management can explain how occupational identities are constructed. Amongst other things this may include the criteria which employers use for recruitment into work.
- (c) It is through their experiences at work, and the nature of the conditions of work that youngsters look for meanings and construct frameworks of reference on which their identities rest. This involves their experiences of



the forms of control and power relationships which characterise the culture of the workplace, and the extent to which they accept or resist these elements of work culture.

- (d) It is through experiences at work that the cultural and productive forces in society emerge. The production and reproduction of culture through work can explain how the construction of career identities depends upon certain labour processes.

By discussing each of the foregoing aspects of the world of work this chapter focuses on the importance of understanding the relationship between these and people's definitions of them; all of which point to the active and generative power of culture and consciousness which form the basis of the workers' constructions of reality, and which can give some indication of how the so-called material structures of work are themselves cultural products which become transmitted into meanings and inter-subjectivity of everyday life.

Within the context of the present study, it should therefore be evident that the young worker's experience of work is a reflection not only of his or her personal characteristics, but, as Jenkins (1983:127) maintains, it is also the outcome of **"the product of the practices of employers or their delegates, and the organisational characteristics, both formal and informal, of specific industries, occupations and state institutions."**

## 6.2 SEGMENTATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET

Many of the lower-working-class students in the present study, who found employment soon after leaving school entered the secondary labour market; while other students who proceeded to tertiary education aspired to jobs in the primary market.<sup>1</sup>(p.122) Those who entered apprenticeships, and lower-secretarial and-clerical jobs can be located somewhere between the primary and secondary sectors. Jobs in the primary market are characterised by high wages, good working conditions, employment

stability, job security, and chances for advancement. The jobs in the secondary market are less attractive. They offer low wages, poor working conditions, and little opportunity for advancement.

The perceptions and experiences of work as conceived by young school-leavers are affected by the way in which the labour market is stratified. Of course, when we examine the segmentation of the labour market it is important not to overlook certain labour attributes such as education, experience or skill. Ultimately, it is the system of control in the workplace that affects the ways in which experience, training, schooling, skills and other attributes assume their importance (Mackenzie, 1982:85). For example, jobs in the secondary markets are organised in such a way that not much emphasis is placed on education or experience; whereas jobs in the primary market are structured to emphasise these requirements.

The range of jobs taken by the students in this study displayed very different labour market outcomes and processes. Nevertheless, it was the secondary market which was most striking in the light of the casual nature of the employment which it offered. Few skills were required in these jobs, and few could be learnt. By contrast, those students who obtained lower-clerical and secretarial jobs found greater job security, higher wages and some opportunities for advancement. Though such work is sometimes repetitive and routine, it is not as temporary or as casual as secondary employment.

Labour market segmentation was also a useful tool for classifying the data of the present study according to race, class and gender. For example, the experience of the work done by Indian students is that of a minority race group, which should be linked with the overall structuring of labour markets in South Africa. Though Indians occupy an intermediate position in the South African occupational structure, the existence of customary race discrimination has consolidated their secondary position within a segmented labour market. Despite the fact that several discrimi-

natory labour laws have been recently amended or abolished,<sup>2(p.122)</sup> there are still large numbers of Indians in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Social-class differences within the Indian community also account for the way in which the labour market processes allocate certain groups of workers to particular jobs. As different groups in the labour market find themselves in different positions, the inequality between social classes becomes apparent. For example, in the present study the class experiences of those students in dead-end jobs were different from those in clerical positions, or those who had entered tertiary education in the hope of finding jobs in the primary market.

Finally, the idea of labour market segmentation was of value to this study since it provided insights into the position of girls in the labour force, and the division of labour according to gender. It also enables us to see how race and class differences operate as much on the female labour force as they do on male labour. Some of the jobs taken by girls in this study shed some light on the reproduction of gender and class differences. Keil and Newton (1980:99) discuss these issues by pointing to employers' beliefs and assumptions about women workers. The stereotype that prevails is that women are not seriously committed to the labour market and should therefore be regarded as temporary or relatively short-term workers. These and other related issues concerning gender, education and employment are discussed by Weiner (1985), Chisholm and Holland (1986), Furlong (1976), Whyld (1983), and Barton and Walker (1983b).

#### 6.2.1 Job Opportunities for Indians

Maasdorp and Pillay's (1976:242-45) study of the occupational mobility of Indians in Natal, and Butler-Adam and Venter's (1982:57-9) Indian housing survey in Durban indicate the structure of work opportunities. Despite the fact that the majority of the school-leavers in this study entered semi-skilled jobs, apprenticeships, and lower-level secretarial and clerical

jobs, both these studies indicate that Indians in the Durban area are on the fringe of a developed labour market. It is therefore necessary to examine the educational and career aspirations of the students in the present study against the background of this structural setting.

The majority of the Indian workforce is employed in the manufacturing and commerce sectors. According to Butler-Adam and Venter (1982:58), 43 per cent of the workforce in Durban are in manufacturing, 31 per cent in commerce, 13 per cent in services and service industries, 7 per cent in transport and communications, and 4 per cent in building and construction. This study also reveals that about half the workforce are married workers; 18 per cent are in professional, semi-professional, technical, managerial and supervisory jobs; while a further 18 per cent are employed in clerical; and 9 per cent in sales jobs. The majority of the workers are in lower-paid jobs, with relatively small proportions in highly-paid positions.

However, during the past few decades a widening range of jobs has been available to Indians in Natal, and more particularly in Greater Durban. Maasdorp and Pillay (1976:243) say that this is due to economic growth, and also because, **"as Whites have tended to move to increasingly skilled positions, so the jobs they vacate on the occupational ladder are filled by Blacks, particularly Indians and Coloureds."**

Maasdorp and Pillay sketch the following picture of some of the jobs held by Indians. In the semi-skilled sector the jobs listed are those in clothing and shoe factories, and in the textile industry. There are no specific educational qualifications or training requirements laid down for these jobs. Skilled-manual jobs are those in the wood, furniture and motor industries, and they require some post-school training, with at least a standard-eight certificate.

Over the years there have been changes in the professional, semi-professional, technical, managerial and supervisory categories. Whereas up to the 1940s, most Indians in the professions

were teachers, lawyers and doctors, today there are engineers, architects, industrial chemists, pharmacists, university and college lecturers, medical, sugar, chemical and other technologists, chartered accountants, and so on.

In the state sector, various administrative and clerical posts have been created within the department which is responsible for the "own affairs" of Indians. In the municipal sector, Indians have already been employed as health and housing inspectors, and as town engineers. In the Department of Justice, there are Indian prosecutors and clerks of court. Opportunities have also been created in the police force, the post office, and more recently in the navy.

In the private sector, Indians are employed in many types of clerical and sales-related jobs. During the last fifteen years or so, branches of banks, building societies and insurance companies have been established in Indian areas and are staffed almost entirely by Indians. For a long time, White firms have employed Indian clerks and sales representatives. This trend has continued.

As far as women are concerned, in recent years many have become teachers, nurses and social workers. There is also a small number of doctors and lawyers. In both Indian and White firms, more and more Indian women are employed as secretaries, typists, receptionists and sales representatives. Most of them have reached standard ten. Machinists in clothing factories are almost exclusively women. They usually have primary or basic secondary school education.

### 6.3 CHOICE OF JOBS, AND THE ENTRY INTO WORK

Studies such as those of Blackburn and Mann (1979), Willis (1977), Roberts (1984) Ashton, Maguire and Garland (1982), and Payne (1985) give some insight into how young workseekers choose jobs. They also tell us something about how entry into work is achieved. This is especially evident when the status levels of jobs in different sectors of the labour market are examined.

In the present study, the status levels of employment are evident when we examine the perceptions of those in semi-skilled jobs, and those in clerical and secretarial jobs and those serving apprenticeships. The semi-skilled workers felt that their work was not very stimulating. Therefore they were not committed to these jobs. Roberts (1984) says that while it may appear that this is a casual and haphazard way of choosing a job, it is understandable in the light of the students' expectations, and the existing state of the shortage of jobs. Since they could not find employment that was suited to their level of education they were prepared to accept unattractive jobs and then move into other jobs once conditions in the labour market had improved.

The main concern of those in clerical and secretarial jobs, and in apprenticeships was to improve their positions and to **move ahead in life**. Such jobs, they felt, must provide better prospects for the future. In particular, those in clerical and secretarial jobs, associated these with mental rather than manual activity. This distinction between the manual and the mental is clearly explained by Willis (1977:103). The ideological assumption which underlies this division is that mental labour is more difficult, more demanding, requires a higher educational standard, and hence carries more status than manual labour. This mental/manual distinction can also be associated with how their families and schools perceive occupations.

Most of those who entered semi-skilled work in the secondary labour market did not have the necessary educational qualifications for higher-status jobs. As a result they tended to rely more heavily on contacts established through family members, neighbours and friends. Roberts (1984) explains the fate of school-leavers in Britain in similar terms. Those who were in semi-skilled jobs relied heavily on advice from relatives and neighbours who worked in local firms, and they regarded this as more valuable than the careers information received in schools. Thus, their entry into work depended on chance and the rational use of limited opportunities, rather than on choice, personal preference, and the advice of careers teachers.

The school-leavers in the present study who obtained apprenticeships and lower-middle-class clerical and secretarial jobs also relied on similar sources of information. However, in addition they also used the knowledge of careers-guidance specialists, employment bureaus, and read newspaper advertisements for vacancies.

Another important aspect of the entry into work, which should not be overlooked when explaining career identities is that of the criteria used when recruiting. Employers who recruit for lower-status jobs do not focus too much on the importance of formal educational qualifications. Rather, they focus on a series of ascriptive characteristics such as appearance and an attitude of willingness to be helpful at work. They also do not usually differentiate between the finer points of examination grades. This applies especially to semi-skilled jobs as indicated in Blackburn and Mann's examination of the market for unskilled male manual labour in Peterborough. They found that **responsibility** and **discipline** were rated very highly in the recruitment policies of managers (Blackburn and Mann, 1979: 107). By focussing on perceived attitudes, the internal labour market becomes fundamentally an apprenticeship in co-operation with employers.

This is not surprising, especially when one considers the findings of Ashton and Maguire (1980), and those of Ashton, Maguire and Garland (1982): that for certain kinds of work, educational qualifications are a disadvantage. This is especially so when employers are recruiting for dead-end jobs. Rather than stressing educational qualifications, some important non-academic criteria which they rate highly are the employee's attitude to work, his **self presentation**, and personality, as indicated by punctuality, cleanliness and general smartness (Ashton and Maguire, 1980:151-52). Some of the clues which employers might use to distinguish between job applicants are : clothes and tattoos, speech, style of presentation of self and personal mannerisms. These clues can be linked with social-class differences in life-styles and were evident when the young workers of the present study were recruited.

The criteria used for recruitment into the secondary labour market presented certain contradictions to the school-leavers in this study. The desire to strive for educational qualifications is a strong characteristic of Indian culture at all social-class levels, but more especially in the middle class. Whilst it is acknowledged that educational qualifications *per se* do not guarantee entry into the labour market at the lower levels, nevertheless such credentials do function as a screening device and as an essential pre-condition to certain higher levels of employment. Many of the students in this study were particularly conscious of this importance attached to educational qualifications which led to their becoming a **cultural currency**<sup>3</sup>(p. 122) (Collins, 1979). Those who entered tertiary education with a view to eventually getting jobs in the primary labour market realized that since occupations raise their status by demanding as high an entry price as possible they have to acquire credentials if they wish to earn career opportunities.

#### 6.4 THE NATURE OF WORK AND WORK EXPERIENCES

The discussion on entry into work needs to be followed by some consideration of work and work experiences. This can explain more fully how the occupational identities of school-leavers are built up. Within the working environment itself, it is important to consider how the culture of the workplace is experienced and constructed, the levels of acceptance and resistance of workers, and the forms of control and the kinds of power relationships with which they are confronted.

This is a useful approach to get some understanding of the experience of work and the specific forms and meanings which it assumes. Willis (1977:2), for example says that when such aspects of work are considered, they "... help to construct both the identities of particular subjects and also distinctive class forms at the cultural and symbolic level as well as at the economic and structural level." The experience of work has to be examined at the level of structure as well as that of identity.



#### 6.4.1 The Culture of the Workplace

In this respect, it is important to examine how the students interpret their experiences at work. These experiences are inevitably linked with their building up of culture within the context of the working environment. It is through their everyday activities at work that people produce sets of meanings that constitute the culture of the workplace. Work is an active area of human involvement. It not only makes people, but is also made by them. Work affects the general social nature of people's lives in very profound ways. Of course, whilst it is important to recognise that the culture of work is constructed to some degree by people, it is equally important to acknowledge that this culture is also located within the structures of capitalism. Nevertheless, people's work experiences constitute their own culture in the sense that it can be reshaped and ultimately refashioned (Willis, 1975:3). Most people spend much of their time at work, basing their identity on their work activity and they are defined by others mainly on how they relate to work.

It was through their experiences at work that the students in the present study looked for meanings, and imposed frameworks on which their own constructions of reality were based. They also obtained a wide range of informal knowledge about the work situation from the older workers.

Once in employment, individuals are also exposed to different types of occupational cultures, and in the process they recognise and develop themselves. For example, apprentices in certain trades learn technical skills, and in this way build their occupational identities. They acquire craft knowledge from their supervisors and foremen, and develop pride in their work. On the other hand, even under the bad working conditions of dead-end jobs, workers develop a culture of work which enables them to seek enjoyment in activity and to exercise their abilities. Willis (1975:7), for example, says that "they do, paradoxically, thread through the dead experience of work a living culture, which isn't simply a reflex of defeat."

Though the experiences of the students in this study are not identical to those of Willis's lads, nevertheless the basic attitudes and values associated with such jobs have some relevance to an understanding of the general working-class culture of Indian youth, and particularly for the culture of their work environments. It is through reference to studies such as those of Willis (1977), Pollert (1981), McRobbie (1978), Anyon (1983), Acker (1984), Weis (1985), Troyna and Williams (1985), Eggleston et al. (1986), and Apple (1987) that elements such as masculinity, femininity, humour, sexism, racism, and other related aspects can be used to get some understanding of how Indian youths construct their career identities. This is especially relevant in the case of those who obtained semi-skilled jobs. In their general powerlessness over the labour process, these students' experiences were basically those of compromise and settlement.

Most school-leavers in semi-skilled jobs settle down to the routine of work with relative ease in the face of boredom and lack of autonomy. Their tasks at work are simple, repetitive and uninteresting. Since there is very little chance of promotion in these jobs, they work mainly for immediate rewards. It is their experience of class culture through the family and the peer group that reinforces this orientation of the here and now (Ashton and Field, 1976:50).

Most of them feel that they are **locked** into a future in careerless occupations. Hence they try to create situations which enable them to survive in these conditions in the short-term only, waiting for an opportunity to get some better job. It is the careerless nature of their work which allows such job changes to be easily made within the semi-skilled market.

By comparison, the work experiences of those in low-level clerical and office jobs, and apprenticeships enable these people to construct their occupational identities differently. For example, apprentices realise that the formal training which they receive enables them to acquire a set of skills which in the long-term, provides them with a favourable bargaining position in the

labour market. It also provides them with a degree of job security. They therefore derive some satisfaction and interest from their work, and tend to become more involved in it than those who are in semi-skilled and dead-end jobs. Their performance at work is an important aspect of the way in which they view themselves and their jobs. Generally, they see themselves as acquiring a trade in order to better themselves. Roberts (1984:41), for example, says that an important aspect of the culture of the workplace of the apprentice is that he is exposed to the belief that work should be an area in which one achieves something and makes something of oneself.

Those who are in low-level clerical and office jobs, especially girls, tend to view these as clean, glamorous, professional and easy. These beliefs stem from the ideology of mental labour which they have acquired in school, and which is associated with patriarchal relations and middle-class values. By contrast, the ethos of working-class culture which emphasises masculinity sees clerical and office work as fit only for females. It is clean and light, not hard, dirty or strenuous.<sup>4</sup>(p. 122)

#### 6.4.2 Conflict and Resistance in the Workplace

The construction of these different kinds of occupational identities depends also on the nature of conflict and resistance which workers experience in their jobs. Such conflict and resistance is an integral part of the culture of the working environment, and should not be overlooked when explaining career pathways. Apple (1982a:74) says that whether it is semi-skilled or clerical jobs, the work culture provides important grounds for worker resistance, collective action, and informal control of pacing and skill. Workers resist in subtle and important ways.

However, since the present study deals mainly with the initial work experiences of young school-leavers, there is not much scope for studying their actual forms of resistance. Nevertheless, this aspect of work culture is still relevant to any explanation of their constructions of identities. Their associations with older workmates, and their observations of what goes on at

work does socialise them sufficiently into this aspect of their jobs. Conflict and resistance are therefore likely to be the basis on which some of their future actions will rest.

The culture of the workplace, and the labour process should therefore be regarded as complex and not a simple correspondence between the school and the economy, as some studies on the transition from school to work lead us to believe. The labour process does not simply determine the lives of workers, or the culture of the workplace. Mackenzie (1982:79) says that since the interests of managers and workers are not identical, the co-operation and control of the workforce has to be seen as problematic.

Conflict exists in the work environment mainly because of the competing interests of workers and employers. What is good for one may be frequently costly for the other. Edwards (1979:12-13) says that such conflict, for example, arises over such matters as : How shall work be organised? What work pace shall be established? Under what conditions must producers labour? In this sense, the workplace often becomes a battleground, as employers attempt to extract the maximum effort from workers, and workers try to resist.<sup>5</sup>(p. 123)

However, it is important to realise that such resistance exists in ways that are not simply reproductive. The labour process reveals different kinds of conflicts, and the workplace becomes a contested terrain. One example of such an area of conflict is that of working-class resistance on the shopfloor. This resistance reflects cultural patterns derived from working-class life, which young workers have already been exposed to in their families, neighbourhoods, and peer groups. For example, it is the masculine style of expression that influences much of the forms of struggle and conflict. Masculinity is deeply embedded in the manual power of the working class. Willis (1977:156) says that this "... gives space and micro-strategies for time wasting, systematic soldiering and resistance to intensification of the labour process." Other elements of working-class culture which Willis mentions are the distinctive forms of language, and the highly developed humour of the shopfloor.

#### 6.4.3 Control and Power in the Workplace

Conflict and resistance cannot, however, be understood without reference to the forms of control which employers exert. Workers develop different meanings and construct different frameworks of reference under differing conditions of power and control.

While workers may use hidden or open forms of resistance to protect themselves against employers, the latter use a variety of sophisticated means as forms of control. They have at their disposal various methods by which to organise, shape, and affect workers' forms of resistance. Some of these forms of control have become more institutional and less visible to the workers.

Large firms have usually more formal and more consciously contrived methods than smaller firms. Some such structural forms of control are embedded in either the physical structure of labour which produces **technical** control, or in its social structure which produces **bureaucratic** control. Both of these forms were observed in the work situations of the students in the present study, and their interpretations of work experience incorporated such notions of power and control.

Technical control involves the use of technology. Machinery and the flow of work are so designed that the technology itself controls the entire labour force (Mackenzie, 1982:81). In this way, employers attempt to reduce the role of the worker to that of attendants of prepacked machinery. In large firms, especially those in mass-production industries, work is subject to such technical control.

Bureaucratic control which is the more common form of control observed in this study is embedded in the social and organisational structure of the firm. Rules and procedures of work are set by management, and bureaucratic control divides and stratifies the workforce in such a way that its ability to resist is reduced significantly. Such control is built into job categories, work rules, promotion procedures, discipline, wage scales, and definitions of responsibilities. Bureaucratic control is also evident in visual reminders of rules stuck on notices on walls. Pollert

(1981:129) in her study of women workers in a factory gives an example of this - No **"moving between departments and loitering on the staircases, in the corridors, ...."** Such rules and procedures are elaborately and systematically laid out. The foremen, supervisors, superintendents and other minor officials see that they are carried out.

Though workers can and do create their lived forms of resistance, the power struggle in factories, offices and shops is an unequal one because of the many forms of technical and bureaucratic control. Apple (1982a:84) says that the success of workers' resistance depends upon the structural limitations and selection processes which they encounter; while Willis (1975:13) maintains that the unequal power relations in places of work is due partly to the fact that workers' resistance **"occurs in prior conditions of oppression and dominance, and the whole nature of the system is such that the worker's hands are directed by others than himself, and the product of his hands is taken away."**

#### 6.5 PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF CULTURE THROUGH WORK

Within the broader framework of culture, the construction of career identities should also be seen as the production and reproduction of life-styles. Within the context of the present study, this production and reproduction means that the processes underlying the students' experiences at work should be seen together with their experiences of the informal and formal processes of schooling, the family, neighbourhood, media and their class experiences in general. All of these are vital in the total preparation of labour power, and when taken collectively they are useful in providing some interpretation of how labour processes are continually reproduced in society.

The production and reproduction of culture should therefore be seen in the light of experiences at work as everyday practice, as well as the actualization of the cultural and productive forces in society. The workers' personal identities must be related to the wider structures in which they exist. For the present study this would involve an examination of the material

nature of work conditions, the market situation in which the students' jobs are located, and the various work experiences and circumstances to which they are exposed. Esland and Salaman (1975:30) say that when all of these are taken into account they can be systematically related to the market power of those who sell, or buy labour and expertise.

By using this approach, it is possible to look at how class structures and race and gender statuses are produced and reproduced at work. While the present study is not directly concerned with an examination of capitalism, or with a detailed examination of class cultures, any notion of the production and reproduction of culture through work activity and experiences should nevertheless be seen in the context of some kind of critique of capitalist society and mass capitalist culture. As such, the discussion of the career routes of the students in this study in the final analysis should make some reference to the notion of power and the social construction of capitalism, race, class and gender. Ultimately, these school-leavers become workers whose lives are situated within the structure and dynamics of particular capitalist firms and the wider system of which these are a part. This wider system embraces among other things, their class culture, family, gender status, the education that they receive, and the neighbourhoods in which they live.

Studies such as those of Willis (1977), Anyon (1980), Jenkins (1983), and Carnoy and Levin (1985) have discussed such aspects of the production and reproduction of class cultures. They state that the reproduction of middle-class culture is more or less straightforward. Unlike the working class, in middle-class culture, there is a relative weakness of informal, group-based structure, and hardly any development of its own private practices, language and social habits. Willis (1975:4), for example, says that "it moves along the dimension of the 'formal', is given by the 'formal', and does not subvert the formal." Those students who are successfully socialised into middle-class values at school find little difficulty in their work situations in accepting the concepts of **career, job satisfaction, improvement, and job status**. Reproduction occurs easily because there is a successful

fusion of self and job, and the formal definition of the job is lived out without much difficulty. In the present study, many of the students who entered tertiary education, aiming for jobs in the primary labour market had similar perceptions. The guidelines provided by work and by superiors at work are accepted in the belief that they will bring long-term gratification.

By contrast, working-class culture is reproduced at work through more complex ways via the rich informality based on a rejection of the formal. Reproduction is achieved not only through the acceptance of dominant ideologies, but also through opposition and resistance. Thus, work culture in this case is not necessarily only a reproductive form. It creates a base for the development of alternative norms which provide some degree of autonomy from employers. This includes a partial control of skills, pacing, and knowledge.

When the production and reproduction of class cultures are seen in this way, the cultural context of work should be closely examined by looking at the structures of various definitions and rationalities that underly the legitimation of work events. Esland and Salaman (1975:28) maintain that the production and reproduction of culture in work situations can be meaningfully understood by employing critical perspectives on the major cultural conditions under which specific types of work activity occur and are legitimated.



NOTES

1. The distinction between primary and secondary labour markets has given rise to a number of dual labour market theses (Bosanquet and Doeringer, 1973; Blackburn and Mann, 1979). Though these still need to be refined, the notion of the dual labour market is useful for analysing working experiences according to race, class and gender (Allen and Smith, 1975:75). The way in which the labour market is segmented is due to various historical, economic and social forces.
2. Though racial discrimination permeates the South African economy, some important changes have taken place since the 1970s. Van der Horst (1981a:34) discusses some of the reforms in labour legislations which resulted through the appointment in 1977 of the **Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions**. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the historical patterns of economic development in South Africa have resulted in the segmentation of the labour market on racial lines. Nattrass (1980:25) says that as a result of this process, White labour as a group, has become entrenched in a highly advantageous position when compared with the workforce of other race groups.
3. Collins (1979) states that an over-emphasis on educational qualifications results in a qualification spiral in which students' desire for credentials reduces their market value.
4. The ideological division between mental and manual labour is well illustrated by Willis's lads (Willis, 1977:103). They felt that manual labour is outside the domain of school and carries with it the aura of the real adult world. As in the case of school, mental work demands too much, and encroaches too far upon their private and independent worlds. The lads therefore associate mental labour with the threat of a demand for obedience and conformism.

5. Such resistance in the workplace can be understood by examining conflict in the labour process as it occurs under definite historical circumstances, or within a specific economic and social context. It is important to recognise that production is part of the larger process of capital accumulation. Edwards (1979:15) says that conflict at work must therefore be understood as a product of both the strategies or wills of the combatants and definite conditions not wholly within the grasp of either workers or employers.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7. UNEMPLOYMENT

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Much of the literature (Moor, 1976; Parker *et al.*, 1977) which examines the relationship between education and work assumes that the major axis of discussion lies between school and paid employment.<sup>1</sup>(p.142) However, the transition from school involves more than entering paid employment. Unemployment is a major consideration, which revealed itself during the late 1970s and early 1980s when there were many school-leavers for whom there was no permanent paid work immediately available (Payne, 1985; Willis, 1986). Many school-leavers in the present study have had similar experiences.

In recent years, the threat of unemployment has affected the ways in which youngsters see their career pathways. Levels of unemployment and employment are constantly featured in the media, on television newscasts and in the press. Gloomy predictions for the future are often made, as a result of which, unemployment, the recession and economic crisis are now deeply embedded in the minds of the public.

Willis (1986:155-61) points out that the long standing debates about inequality in education, about class reproduction, resistance in the form of race, class and gender expressions can no longer exclude the fact of today's mass youth unemployment. According to him, this unemployment brings a modern form of poverty in a cultural as well as an economic sense. Some of its features are : reduced mobility for youth, exclusion from leisure, and feelings of isolation.

Those who are most likely to be unemployed are in lowly-paid and insecure jobs, the youngest and the oldest in the labour force, people from racially-discriminated groups, and generally those with the fewest skills, who live in the most depressed areas. The jobless teenagers in this study have been especially affected by issues like race, gender, education and family backgrounds.

A useful way of studying the perceptions of these students is to look at their experiences of unemployment at both individual and structural levels. Young people's chances of becoming unemployed are partly determined by individual characteristics. This includes their level of educational qualifications and various ascriptive characteristics such as race, family background, attitudes and motivation. Secondly, such individual characteristics are in turn affected by certain underlying social and economic factors, and in particular by the organisation of the labour market and the hiring and firing practices of different kinds of firms. Other structural factors include the relationship of unemployment to schooling, and the behaviour of youth in the labour market.

This chapter sets out to examine the nature of youth unemployment, and its impact on the shaping of the career identities of school-leavers. It does so by examining factors relevant to unemployment, and youth unemployment in particular. Existing labour market practices, the search for work, and the relationship between schooling and unemployment are also included in the explanation of the social construction of career identities. Finally, matters of race, class and gender are mentioned as part of the overall framework of the experience of unemployment.

## 7.2 UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOCIETY

An examination of the scale and level of unemployment in society can offer some understanding of the context within which individuals have to reconstruct or modify their career aspirations. This is especially evident when one considers the structural context within which unemployment is experienced by young work-seekers. Large-scale unemployment is not confined to South Africa only, but is an international problem.<sup>2</sup>(p. 142) In the European Common Market countries there are 6 to 8 million unemployed. There is also a high rate of unemployment in the U.S.A., Canada and Australia.

The impact of unemployment on the efforts of young people to find work is perhaps best illustrated in the case of Britain.

A net loss of jobs coupled with increasing numbers seeking work sent unemployment soaring more rapidly than ever before in the 1980s. Unemployment levels began to rise from the mid - 60s. Watts (1983:16) indicates that from just under half a million officially regarded as unemployed in the mid-1960s, the figure rose to over a million in 1975, and to over two million in 1980, and to three million in 1983. Between 1972 and 1977 general unemployment rose by 45 per cent, and unemployment among 16 to 17 year-olds by 120 per cent (Roberts, 1984:46).

Jenkins and Sherman (1979) say that this international problem of unemployment is due firstly to the short-term world trade recession; and secondly to the changes in industrial structure and the more efficient use of people and machinery.

#### 7.2.1 Youth Unemployment

With increasing unemployment the particular plight of young people has received special attention.<sup>3,4(p. 142)</sup> However, youth unemployment is not a new problem. But, in recent years, what was new about it was the extreme imbalance between the number of school-leavers and the opportunities available in the labour-market (Roberts, 1980). As a result, levels of youth unemployment began to rise dramatically (Payne, 1985:171-76). This trend has left firm impressions on the minds of young school-leavers, and has also led employers to rethink the roles of young workers in the labour force.

The increase in youth unemployment is partly due to the increased number of married women who are working, and to the fact that in recent years fewer people reached retirement age (Atkinson and Rees, 1982:3). Other structural factors which account for increased youth unemployment are : the low level of productivity of a significant number of young workers; the high costs involved in the training of young workers who may be highly mobile; and the technological changes which have modified the job structure so that the proportion of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs usually taken by young people has steadily fallen. Since the 1960s the shortage of skilled workers led to a belief in **upskilling**, the notion that a more skilled and a more educated labour force was required in the economy.

When seen against this background, it is not difficult to understand why young jobseekers find many avenues closed to them. Employers tend to see them as immature and irresponsible, and unsuitable for heavy work. Preference is given to older and more experienced workers. A frequent complaint of many school-leavers in this study who had long spells of unemployment was that they could not get jobs because employers regarded them as inexperienced. Roberts (1984:63) also found that during these difficult times young people are ineligible for most advertised jobs, even unskilled occupations, because they are considered to be too young or lack the experience of older competitors.

Osterman (1980:96) suggests that high youth unemployment is due to the relationship of work patterns and schooling, the hiring pattern of firms, and the behaviour of youth. Together, these many characteristics of the youth labour market are useful in explaining the trends in unemployment, and also provide the context within which the search for jobs may be explained. Willis (1986:156) maintains that the question of youth unemployment today cannot ignore the economic, cultural and political position of youth; and suggests how these are constructed by dominant forces. This is a useful context within which the material, social and cultural interests of youth may be analysed.

#### 7.2.2 Unemployment in South Africa

As in most other countries, in South Africa the unemployment situation became worse as the recession continued. By 1983, the time when the students in the present study were either in their final year at school or were looking for work, the number of unemployed was estimated by some academics at 2.5 to 3 million (Cooper *et al.*, 1984:132). Between 1984 to 1985 the number of registered unemployed amongst Whites, Coloureds and Asians more than doubled (Cooper *et al.*, 1986:134). Though Government figures are much lower, they also showed an increase. The Government's methods of collecting statistics on unemployment have been criticised because there is no compulsion on persons to register. Nevertheless, tables 7.1 and 7.2 (on pages 128 to 129) give some indication of unemployment in the country, and of youth unemployment. They also indicate the specific position of Indians among the unemployed.

TABLE 7.1

## REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED IN EACH INSPECTORATE AREA OF SOUTH AFRICA

A R E A	W H I T E					C O L O U R E D					A S I A N				
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Johannesburg	1 512	3 600	5 435	5 146	10 489	1 154	2 687	2 981	2 536	5 144	121	370	489	503	1 141
Cape Town	780	1 352	1 498	1 566	4 207	1 592	3 557	6 233	4 172	12 186	16	10	-	21	26
Durban	1 179	2 082	2 342	3 189	5 179	715	796	2 302	879	2 780	2 158	5 274	7 017	3 393	8 032
Pretoria	448	708	1 025	292	2 506	153	54	146	100	432	41	22	25	17	249
Port Elizabeth	745	851	1 288	1 146	2 792	1 460	3 506	3 770	2 612	5 011	12	36	51	26	122
Bloemfontein	463	915	1 457	834	1 664	170	491	672	366	801	-	-	-	-	37
East London	214	319	449	511	586	148	174	291	244	421	3	5	1	8	119
Kimberley	101	170	268	205	261	236	735	1 412	1 292	1 660	1	4	8	12	17
George	76	112	84	191	384	126	189	325	205	880	-	-	-	-	1
T O T A L	5 518	10 109	13 846	13 089	28 068	5 754	12 189	18 132	12 406	29 315	2 352	5 721	7 591	3 980	9 744

Sources : Cooper, C. et al.(1984) **Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, 1983**. South African Institute of Race Relations : Johannesburg:133.

Cooper, C. et al.(1986) **Race Relations Survey 1985**. South African Institute of Race Relations : Johannesburg: 133-34.

These figures reveal sharp overall increases in unemployment among Asians in Durban. Such increases are also evident in the case of Whites in Johannesburg, and Coloureds in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.<sup>5</sup>(p. 143)

TABLE 7.2

REGISTERED UNEMPLOYED YOUTH IN SOUTH AFRICA IN DECEMBER 1983

R A C E	NO. UNEMPLOYED UNDER 21 YEARS OLD	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UNEMPLOYED
White	689	6.12
Coloured	744	6.53
Asian	469	9.25
African	1 958	8.07
TOTAL	3 860	7.42

Source : **Department of Manpower.** Statistics Regarding Workseekers, as at end of December 1983. (Table compiled from statistics for males and females).

The effects of youth unemployment amongst Indians have been severe. According to the Central Statistical Service (1987:10), out of a total of 33 714 registered unemployed workers, 8 258 (24 per cent) were under the age of twenty years. The Principal Proprietor of the Durban Employment Bureau noted that **"due to a pretty lousy depression and because Indian school-leavers are flooding out of school, this sector of the population finds it very difficult to find employment"** (The Daily News, January 24, 1984). Employers appear to be reluctant to employ youngsters who have recently left school.

Since 1980 unemployment amongst Indians has steadily increased, especially in the Durban area. By 1986 the trend indicated that, when compared with Whites and Coloureds, Indians are the largest group amongst the unemployed. The study by Butler-Adam and Venter (1982:59) showed that amongst Indians in Durban **"for every seven people who had a job, there was one person**



looking for employment. In the light of the sorts of jobs which most people had, this figure is particularly high, since employers increasingly hire Black African workers to fill unskilled and manual positions." These researchers predicted that the unemployment rate was unlikely to decrease.

**The Daily News**, June 14, 1983 reported that in March 1982, there were 1 757 Indians, 540 Coloureds, and 1 105 Whites in Durban, who were unemployed. In 1983, there were 5 934 unemployed Indians, 1 917 Coloureds and 2 218 Whites. These figures were released by the Department of Manpower.

In August 1986, the Department of Manpower announced that 34 651 people of all races had registered as unemployed in Natal (**The Natal Mercury**, August 6, 1986). In Durban there were 10 871 unemployed Indians, of which 3 314 were women. The Whites numbered 4 045, and the Coloureds 2 161.

### 7.3 UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET PRACTICES

Certain practices in the labour market have important implications for youth unemployment. As the recession deepened it accelerated certain structural changes, including the decline of some older industries with out-dated technologies. These structural changes in turn began to reduce the demand for young people in the labour market of the late 1970s and the 1980s. As a result of these new practices there was a great reduction in jobs traditionally available to unqualified and untrained school-leavers (Payne, 1985: 171-73). There was also a decline in the number of apprenticeships. The greatest number of jobs lost are in those sectors which young people usually enter when starting work for the first time. Some of these jobs are in manufacturing, distribution, transport and communication. As a result they are forced to make other choices.

In a discussion on youth unemployment in Britain, Sinfield (1981:71) says that many jobs, such as messenger and delivery boy or domestic servant, traditionally reserved and taken by teenagers, have vanished. He also points out that teenage boys

are having increased difficulty in acquiring a trade because of the long-term decline in apprenticeships. As a result, young people are having to compete for jobs with experienced workers much more than was the case previously.

Change in existing practices of recruiting also seem to work against youth. Employers prefer older workers for certain newly created jobs because they regard them as more responsible and reliable than young school-leavers. They expect school-leavers to have the same sense of responsibility and commitment as older workers. Deem (1983:28) says that these expectations are so because changes in the labour processes during the late 1970s and early 1980s, especially the introduction of new technology and machinery, have put great emphasis on the social criterion of responsibility. Employers are not very keen to spend time and money training workers, if they can engage the services of older trained workers who already have this sense of responsibility.

Of course, those firms which recruit school-leavers to unskilled jobs do so because they are seeking cheap (often temporary) labour. They are not surprised when these workers quit. The employers realise that the wages, conditions and prospects are unattractive to those seeking permanent employment. But firms which offer stable employment and have well-developed internal labour markets are reluctant to hire youth. The demand for youth labour is thus reduced and they are pushed into less stable sectors of the labour market.

This perception of the behaviour and attitudes of young workers by employers has led to some firms adopting informal methods of recruitment. This practice in the labour market discriminates against those groups who are rated unfavourably on these social criteria. Keil et al. (1966) say that many firms favour the informal practice of recruitment because it **works**. Jenkins (1983) maintains that it enables firms to exclude the **unacceptable** and to recruit non-troublesome labour. Many young people from unskilled homes and disadvantaged race groups who are rated poorly, and do not have the right contacts, often find them-

selves trapped in a situation of being excluded from the better jobs. They are confined to lowly-paid work or are forced to join the ranks of the unemployed.

The use of contacts gives the opportunity to workseekers and employers to check on each other informally, and is an important aspect of internal labour market practice. In the present study, many students considered this to be an important aspect of getting jobs. They were aware that employers seem to give preference to families of their own workers or those whose judgments they trust.

#### 7.4 THE SEARCH FOR WORK

With the current recession, and the existence of such labour market practices, many school-leavers are having a tough time searching for jobs. Those who do succeed often feel that they have survived the onslaught of unemployment by presenting themselves **appropriately** and accepting whatever was available.

As indicated earlier, many young people, especially those who experience long-term unemployment simply do not have the right contacts. Such contacts may include relatives, friends and parents who ask their employers about possible vacancies. **"It's who you know, not what you know."** The lack of this kind of support from family and friends increases the burden of unemployment. This also causes many young school-leavers to re-examine their initial aspirations. Once they have experienced unemployment, they are willing to temper their aims and to aspire to jobs which they feel could be more easily obtained. Some are even willing to accept jobs for low wages. This often means accepting a poorly-paid job with lower status and requiring less skills. Generally, it means a lowering of standards. The search for work during periods of high unemployment often results in a downward shift in the career expectations and hopes of many young people.

A related aspect which explains the search for work during periods of high unemployment is that those who do not have

high educational qualifications are often forced into competition with better qualified and more experienced people (Payne, 1985: 173-74). Many employers take advantage of this situation by recruiting **upmarket** (Sinfield, 1981:72). Roberts (1984:64) says that school-leavers with poor or zero qualifications, who usually obtain unskilled jobs in times of full employment, face sub-employment or unemployment during difficult times. With the rise in unemployment, young, poorly qualified, semi-skilled and unskilled workers also experience gaps between school leaving and first jobs. Their early work histories consist of periods in work, interspersed with spells of unemployment.

Many young jobseekers also have to put up with discouraging treatment from prospective employers. This has a detrimental effect on their self esteem. Rejection is more painful than joblessness. Quite often they are turned down because they have no experience. When such treatment becomes frequent, young school-leavers retreat into the queues of the unemployed, and negative self images are further reinforced. Unemployment is essentially a negative concept, offering a negative identity. Watts (1983:102) says that the notion underlying many official regulations and social attitudes is that those who are unemployed should be spending their time looking for jobs. The opportunities for constructing a positive identity are severely limited. Many of the unemployed experience a continuing feeling of stigma and shame.

A further aspect to consider is that the experience of prolonged unemployment, or alternating between short-term dead-end jobs, diminishes the quality of life for many young people. This is because they are denied the chance of a career in the usual sense of the word. However, short spells of unemployment do not affect the images of young workers to the same extent as long-term unemployment. The sub-employed are people capable of finding and holding down a job. However, the situation may be very different if the period of unemployment is prolonged. For the long-term unemployed fruitless job hunting is soul destroying.

The increasing sense of rejection felt by young unemployed persons is mentioned in studies such as those of Ashton and Field (1976), and Corrigan (1979). They say that in areas of high unemployment, gangs of young people are very likely to engage in delinquent activities to relieve their boredom. This constitutes a counter-culture which provides a source of mutual psychological support and meaning for the unemployed. Feelings of social isolation lead to meetings at street corners, shopping centres, record shops, and so on.

#### 7.5 UNEMPLOYMENT AND SCHOOLING

The massive increase in unemployment in general and of youth unemployment in particular, has also had its effects on the views of parents and children about the value and importance of schooling. In particular, some strong views have been expressed about the need to strive for educational qualifications. This in turn has affected the way in which some groups of students have come to construct their career identities.

For many school-leavers and their parents, unemployment represents a challenge to the legitimacy of schooling (Finn, 1982:52). The progressive liberal ideology on which western education generally stands is that it opens doors to better occupational opportunities. Pupils are persuaded to attend school regularly, to behave well, and to work hard in order to obtain the necessary qualifications that would lead to prestigious employment.

However, with rising unemployment such promises have become increasingly difficult to fulfil. It is not only those who leave school without any qualifications who have difficulty in getting jobs, but also those who acquire some qualifications but then find that these have little or no value on the labour market (Berg, 1970; Dore, 1976). Some students in the present study were sharply critical of the school system and the teachers for failing to warn and prepare them for the experience of unemployment.

In the face of such challenges, during times of high youth

unemployment schools have to cope with many contradictions. For example, they have to continue to motivate pupils for sitting and passing examinations even though they know that qualifications alone will not always result in the acquisition of jobs. They also have to instil in their students a work ethic, social and technical skills and a responsible attitude to work. These are some of the contradictions evident in the process of schooling as experienced by both students and teachers.

Despite this pessimism, many school-leavers still believe that their chances of obtaining employment invariably depend upon their qualifications. Even the most modest qualifications can enhance prospects. This is one of the contradictions facing Indian students whose community has great faith in the value of education. However, Indian students are not alone in this desire for qualifications. The number of pupils taking university entrance and school leaving examinations has continued to rise in most countries, perhaps in the belief that any qualifications are better than none. However, because of worsening unemployment there are too many certificates and too few jobs to go around. Deem (1983:34) says that in such a situation certification represents an entry to the competition and not an outright win. Candidates may find themselves competing with those who have higher qualifications.

The effects which unemployment has had on schooling and on the value of qualifications is therefore an important component of the construction of career pathways. As unemployment begins to devalue qualifications in the eyes of those who possess them, pupils and parents react in diverse ways. Middle-class and other aspiring parents generally encourage their children to go on trying. Those who accept this advice continue with the struggle of equipping themselves with additional qualifications. However, those from unskilled working-class homes adopt the more usual attitude to unemployment : that qualifications are of little or no use because they no longer offer a guarantee of jobs. Roberts (1984:50-1) says that in districts where these attitudes are widespread, unemployment makes schooling appear to be irrelevant. Pupils become restless, disillusioned and indifferent.

## 7.6 RACE, CLASS, GENDER AND UNEMPLOYMENT

The experience of unemployment stemming from structural factors related to race, class and gender should also be taken into account when explaining how young people modify or change altogether their career directions. Career routes are constructed not only in terms of personal preferences, but also in terms of one's location within the stratification order. Unemployment is experienced differently by different groups. Factors such as race, class and gender separate individuals into different groups and consequently affect their life chances in different ways. In his study in Wolverhampton, Willis (1986:164) pointed to the different ways in which unemployment was experienced by : young White working-class males, young Afro-Caribbeans, young women, and young Asians.

### 7.6.1 Race

In race-stratified societies such as those of U.S.A., Britain and South Africa the unemployment rate of young Blacks is double that of young Whites. Studies such as those of Allen and Smith (1975), Watts (1980b) and Dex (1982) have found that Black and Brown school-leavers are less successful than Whites in the quality of jobs obtained; and therefore are more likely to be faced with unemployment. There are also studies such as that of Smith (1977) which indicate that amongst identically qualified applicants for the same jobs, Blacks are generally less successful than Whites. Osterman (1980:75) says that, despite the fact that in the U.S.A. the hiring practices in the secondary labour market in recent years has led to a shrinking of the youth job pool, Whites have captured a larger share of a shrinking pool of jobs.

Compared with youngsters from other race groups, young Blacks find it more difficult to obtain jobs. This is because they have to contend with racial prejudice as well as a shortage of jobs, despite having adequate qualifications or post-school education. In Britain, Caribbeans and Asians are turning in large numbers to the Further Education sector in order to increase

their chances of getting employment. Willis (1986:165) states that because of the experience of racism and discrimination in the job market, they feel that they have to be **"better than Whites"** to get the same job. They have made an enormous investment in education.

However, in many cases the stated aspirations of these youth tend to be high. This may reflect a combination of a lack of knowledge of the processes by which such jobs are obtained and the structural obstacles to such achievement. Such high motivations may also be aimed at getting out of the narrow range of jobs occupied by most of their parents, or it may be due simply to parental pressure. Some of these characteristics apply to the school-leavers in this study. Such aspirations should of course be examined in terms of the realities of the socio-economic situation. The realism or lack of it has to be related to the total situation in which young Indian school-leavers enter the labour market.

#### 7.6.2 Class

Youth unemployment is also disproportionately high amongst the lower social class, indicating how once again it falls much more heavily on certain groups in society. Since the proportion of young people staying on at school rises with social class, it is not surprising that the majority of unemployed youth come from lower-social-class families. Most of the bread-winners in such families are engaged in manual work, especially unskilled work.

Unemployment is concentrated in the working class. During periods of widespread unemployment several members of these families are out of work, and this results in severe pressures in the home. There are problems of restricted accommodation and poverty which Willis (1986:163) speaks of as a **"new social condition."** In discussing this condition he also mentions that increasing unemployment has resulted in many of the old transitions into work being broken. There is no guarantee that school-leavers will obtain employment immediately. Instead, there is an extended period of relative poverty and dependency on the family, friends,



and the state. For many unemployed school-leavers, there is not only wagelessness and dependency, but also alienation, depression, pessimism about the future, and isolation in the home or neighbourhood.

This new social condition is a deepening and institutionalization of inequality and immobility in the working class, and more especially of its lower reaches. Willis (1968:163) goes on to say:

"It is the working class for whom getting a job and the wage has been the main liberation at 16. Only a smallish proportion have benefitted from continuing education, ... For the offspring of the middle class, and for the future middle class, since the 1960s expansion of higher education, 'studentdom' has offered its own transitional states ... Studentdom holds some promise for a career and a future."

A recent phenomenon affecting employment amongst this group is that of **youth homelessness** (Fopp, 1983:24). This term refers to the severe accommodation problems young people experience because they have little or no money for board or rent. It is not by coincidence that it is associated with increasing youth unemployment. Youth homelessness also implies personal problems arising from conflict in family relationships, family abuse and so on. The needs of such young people are varied, and are not simply related to problems of accommodation. It also includes the lack of emotional and physical support to enable young people to lead a satisfying, independent life. In general they have little education, low confidence, and self esteem - all of which adversely affects their chances of getting jobs.

Social class and youth homelessness, taken together, not only point to trends in unemployment, but offer some insight into how cultural forms associated with these phenomena are related to modification or abandoning of job aspirations.

### 7.6.3 Gender

Until recently many studies of youth unemployment ignored the position of girls. Studies which were conducted after 1945 often concentrated on boys. The latter's entry into employment was regarded as a major transition of status; whereas marriage and motherhood were regarded as important for girls. Though similar stereotypes about the occupational roles of the sexes are still prevalent, in recent years young female school-leavers have shared many of the common problems of unemployment with boys. This is because the rapid increase in the numbers of women out of work has been one of the major changes in unemployment during the last decade. Sinfield (1981:83) says that from very low levels in the 1950s and 1960s, the number of women registered as unemployed has increased sevenfold since 1970; whereas in the case of men unemployment has doubled. The number of women in the labour force has increased considerably over the last three decades.

Youth unemployment amongst females has increased because of competition from experienced married women, and labour cut-backs in the light manufacturing industries that once recruited large numbers of female school-leavers. Employers' attitudes also account for the reduced job opportunities for young girls. When jobs are available, employers generally perceive women to be suitable mainly as office workers, shop assistants and factory operatives. A striking feature of the labour market is that jobs requiring scientific and technical qualifications, the prestigious professions and skilled trades are still male-dominated. Many employers still regard women as cheap and flexible labour. They are therefore channelled into jobs requiring manual dexterity, but little training. There are also those firms which are still reluctant to invest in the training of young female school-leavers.

Unemployment drives women further into domestic work. During this period, women are generally much more home-bound than men and less involved in outside activities. The home becomes an alternative site of work, and training for highly stereotyped

and oppressive future roles. Women are caught between domestic drudgery at home and the frustration of unemployment. They become trapped in the home through problems such as these, and are compelled to put up with further domestic work, and increased social isolation.

All of these factors have had a profound effect on the ways in which young women see their own futures. Studies such as Deem (1980b), MacDonald (1980), and Brah and Minhas (1985) have shown that the unemployment of girls is partly reinforced by the apparent satisfaction of most girls with their inferior opportunities. They stress that, although many women realise that they can no longer rely on marriage to offer security for a lifetime, young girls generally still see their future primarily in terms of marriage. Therefore, they are more likely than boys to abandon their first choices of jobs and to lower their sights when obstacles arise. It has also been observed that during periods of high unemployment, many girls still retreat into their homes, but few prefer this enforced domesticity. They are forced into this situation because it is considered less desirable for girls to hang around street corners, and to frequent clubs during periods of joblessness, than it is for boys.

#### 7.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that there are a number of interrelated factors which, taken together, give an indication of the complex nature of unemployment amongst youth. However, many of these factors are a consequence of general economic and social changes as well as technological development, and are therefore structural in character. Thus, unemployment cannot be explained solely in terms of individual feelings of young people or the consequences of deficient education.

Unemployment has ripple effects which run through the whole labour market and the whole of society. It has detrimental effects on people's sense of confidence and fulfilment. In this situation, many able bodied youngsters who are denied

the opportunity to be productive and responsible members may find themselves engaging in activities that lead to the reconstruction of their career identities.

Youth unemployment constitutes a new social condition which presents a different dimension to the transition from school. Many of the old transitions into work, and into independence have been disrupted. Instead, today's youths are exposed to longer periods of poverty and dependency. Poverty and worklessness become a collective condition, experienced in different ways by different races, classes and gender groups.

In the present study, unemployment has to be seen ultimately as a condition in which youngsters are producing meanings about their present and future course of action. Such production of culture points to their possible choices of accepting whatever jobs are available during times of severe unemployment, or joining the ranks of the long-term unemployed. When this kind of cultural production is examined in the context of race, class and gender, one is able to see how it contributes to the social reproduction of the **status quo**.

# NOTES

1. Rees and Gregory (1981:12) in their discussion on the transition from school to work say that the literature from the 1950s and 1960s has shown how young, unqualified school-leavers tended to engage in a period of "**job shopping**" or frequent job changing during early working life. However, by the mid and late 1970s, frequent job changes were increasingly intermingled with longer and longer periods of unemployment. Increasing numbers of young people entered the medium and long-term unemployment categories.
2. Recognition of the importance of youth unemployment has been evident in many countries. The state has responded to this problem by discriminating positively in favour of young unemployed people. International agencies such as **OECD** and **ILO** have set up special committees to look into this particular problem.
3. In Britain and many European countries special schemes have been set up to assist unemployed youth to obtain temporary relief. For example, the **Manpower Services Commission** was set up in Britain to foster training and employment services, particularly in providing special temporary measures to combat unemployment. Its initial involvement in youth employment was largely set up in **The Holland Report** (1977). Since then it has developed a variety of schemes to help the young unemployed. These include **Job Creation** and **Work Experience Programmes**, the **Youth Opportunities Programme**, and the **Youth Training Scheme**.
4. Atkinson and Rees (1982:2) are critical of the manner in which the state has provided such schemes. They say that "... the way in which the state has responded to the problem of youth unemployment, both in Britain and in other free market economies, represents a unique form of intervention in the working of the labour market ... it can be argued that in providing temporary opportunities in a worsening economic climate the M.S.C. is simply

starting with the wrong premise, and as such its activities, however well intentioned, are no more than a cosmetic irrelevance." They suggest that special temporary measures are an inappropriate strategy for a problem whose permanence is politically unacceptable.

5. The Department of Manpower in South Africa has established three training schemes for the unemployed at : Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and Benoni (Cooper et al., 1984: 134). However, problems have been experienced in placing the trained workseekers in employment.

## PART TWO

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. THE DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1 THE FOCUS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

The review and discussion of literature, and of Indian South Africans in Part One focussed attention on the main aim of this research : to add to our understanding of the important process of the transition from school to work, or unemployment.. This is undertaken in Part Two by attempting to analyse the transition process of a group of school-leavers. The intention is to locate the processes by which choices are made within some coherent theoretical framework that takes into account cultural, as well as situational factors.

Designed on the principles of the interpretive perspective, this study tries to capture something of the lived experiences of these school-leavers in the school and work settings; it also includes in its analysis the influences of their families. Based on Mead's symbolic interactionist theory, it recognises the importance of the students' reflexive abilities and their capacity to reflect upon their actions when deciding on jobs. The empirical analysis, therefore, focuses closely on the meanings which these students derive from a variety of interpretations, as they construct their educational and career choices.

However, the focus is not narrowly on the constructions of actors' meanings. Attention is also given to the influence of the social structure within which socialization and work role allocation take place. A complexity of factors is therefore under consideration, the most important being the informal influences of the home environment and the selective processes employed in the school.

#### 1.2 PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Before actually designing this study it was necessary to consider some preliminaries. For example : the benefits to be derived by opting for a longitudinal study instead of a cross-sectional one; and some general guidelines according to which the research schools should be chosen.

A longitudinal study of approximately three to four years duration



would be appropriate to capture the nature of the transitional process by continually monitoring changes in the students' activities and decisions. Another reason for this preference is that the important decisions which students make about their careers do not take place at any single point in time, but are the outcome of a long process, and are usually the result of long-term changes in the students' orientations.

The interactions of students, teachers and other significant persons could be closely observed and studied as the students progress through the senior secondary phase from standards eight to ten.<sup>1</sup>(p. 168) Their routes from school to work (or into unemployment) can be traced by focussing on certain crucial experiences in a variety of settings.

In studying the constructions of these pathways, the main concern is with the interrelationships between the dynamics of the classroom, the dynamics of the career-guidance services in school, and the entry into work. In short, the processes are those involved in personal-decision making.

Such a longitudinal study is very time-consuming, and at best could not be undertaken in more than a few schools chosen very carefully, taking into account the principles of selective sampling, as well as the practical consideration of the time available to the researcher.

At the outset, it was decided to seek the opinions of experienced career-guidance teachers and counsellors, principals of schools, lecturers in teacher education institutions, and others acquainted with conditions in Indian schools. As a result of the many suggestions offered about which would be suitable groups for the study, and which neighbourhoods should be concentrated on, preliminary visits were made to about a dozen schools in various parts of some of the townships in Durban. These visits were undertaken with a view to examining the range of social conditions affecting the student intake of the schools, and also the general educational facilities and career-counselling services available.

Eventually, it was decided that if an in-depth study were to be conducted over a three-to four-year period, then not more

than two schools should be chosen, with half of the sample being selected from each of the schools. These schools should also be typical in the sense that they reflect the range of educational facilities and social conditions prevalent in most schools. A final consideration was that it was also important that the staff and students in the selected sample should be willing to co-operate and participate in the study for the entire duration. Having taken due consideration of these many factors, it was decided to use two large secondary schools in two different suburbs of the city : Orchard Lane in Lyndale, and Ridgemount in Bombay Heights.<sup>2</sup>(p. 168)

The number of students chosen for study in this project may be questioned on the grounds that the sample is too small. Critics of qualitative research generally argue that the findings from such small samples cannot be generalised to a wider community. However, it should be remembered that generalisations of this kind are not the major concern of those researches which are located specifically in a cultural studies framework. "An adherence to large samples comes from the positivist tradition, which attempts to objectify the subjects of study by nullifying subjective differences; emphasis is placed on the similarities between the individuals and some wider population" (Gordon, 1984:110). The choice of a small sample was crucial for the present study whose main objective was to conduct an in-depth probe of the processes underlying the experiences of a group of school-leavers. There was no intention to emphasise the measurement of responses by surveying a large sample. It was more important to extricate the meanings which a small group of school-leavers attach to their actions.

#### 1.2.1 Obtaining Permission for the Research, and Gaining Access to the Schools

Before any formal contact could be made with the two schools it was necessary to get the permission of the Director of Education. The officials of the Education Department, and the principals of the schools perform a kind of gatekeeping role which is understandable since an outside researcher presents a problem for the institution. From their point of view, he does not belong, and is therefore likely to be an element that cannot be controlled within the system (Hammersley, 1979b:107). My request to the Director to conduct a qualitative, observational

study in classrooms posed just such a threat. The Chief Education Planner was deeply concerned about the fact that I would be observing classroom activities not normally visible to people outside the system.

He requested me to produce a questionnaire for approval since the Department has to be careful not to grant permission for research in **"sensitive"** areas. I was also closely questioned on the need for observing in classrooms, the frequency of my visits to the schools, and the effects this would have on students and teachers.

He was also deeply concerned about my interest in culture and education, and was worried that if the study incorporated this aspect it could become **"political."** He believed that each race should preserve its own culture, and fully supported the official policy of racial separation in education. Those who advocate a single educational system for children are **"politically motivated."** At this stage, I considered it unwise to enter into a debate about this narrow view of the relationship between culture and education as this would have jeopardised my chances of obtaining permission.

After lengthy probing, the Chief Education Planner indicated that he would submit my request to a senior official and support it on the grounds that I was **"sufficiently experienced in classroom observation for the past ten years as a supervising lecturer of students' teaching practice."** He felt that **"there would be little danger of disturbing the routine."** The result of such suspicion meant that the process of gaining access to the two schools was initially slow.

When official permission was eventually granted, formal contact was established with the two schools, Orchard Lane in Lyndale, and Ridgemount in Bombay Heights. The principals of the two schools were willing to allow me the use of their schools, and arranged for me to meet the guidance counsellors with whom I would be working closely, and with the teachers of the standard-eight classes. There was little difficulty in securing the assistance of the teachers, many of whom were known to me as former students either of the university where I am now employed, or of the local college of education where I previously

worked. This made it easy for me to communicate the purpose of the study, and my proposed visits to their classrooms were not seen as a threat. They also helped to convey this impression to other teachers whom I did not know. During the brief meetings at both schools, the teachers wanted to know whether they should concentrate on particular students while I was in their classrooms; or whether they should concentrate on specific aspects of their subjects. I was careful to explain that I was only interested in observing the natural course of events, and that nothing was to be arranged specifically for me.

It was also necessary to give a brief account of the goals, purposes, methods of this study and its likely consequences to the teachers and students selected for participation. This, of course had to be tailored to the bare essentials of what these participants seemed to require at this stage, and did not involve disclosing details of the project. To ensure the co-operation of all participants it was also necessary to give guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. The students in particular had to be convinced that any information they gave would not be revealed to their teachers or anyone else. Similarly, some teachers had to be assured that what they said would not be conveyed to their students, the principal, or to officials of the Education Department.<sup>3(p.168)</sup> Of course, I was aware that such guarantees were not necessarily to be taken at face value and that my actions would be constantly monitored as the study progressed.

Once access had been gained in this way, it was essential to explore and map the field in both schools with a view to establishing which classes and which groups of students were to be selected. This exploration and mapping took the form of general observation, familiarization, and discussions with the principals and staff of both schools during the first six weeks of 1981. There were five standard-eight class units in each school, three being ordinary grade and two practical. The ordinary grade class units were arranged according to subject sets, the A and B classes having the brighter pupils. During this period the intention was to find out something about the processes taking place within the school generally; in standard eight in particular. This involved a narrowing down process, eventually concentrating on one ordinary grade and one practical





grade class unit in each school. From each of these particular groups students were selected for in-depth study.

### 1.3 THE CHOICE OF THE SCHOOLS, AND DESCRIPTION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOODS

The geographical areas in which the research schools are located were chosen to typify the backgrounds from which Indian school-leavers emerge when seeking employment. Although I did not have access to any hard data on the social-class composition of Lyndale and Bombay Heights, it was common knowledge at the schools in both areas that the parents of the students come from a cross-section of the community. The occupational structure of both suburbs is similar to that for the rest of Durban. About two-thirds belong to the upper and lower working class, and the rest are in clerical, professional and managerial occupations.<sup>4</sup>(p. 168) The majority of the working class are employed as production or transport workers, and labourers; while those in the white-collar groups, are mainly clerks or teachers. There are also a few small businessmen. The parents in both areas are employed in Durban and its surrounding suburbs, and in Pinetown nearby. There is a great deal of competition for jobs amongst the youngsters, especially for apprenticeships. The young school-leavers are conscious of the importance of **"having a trade"** as a safeguard against increasing unemployment.

Bombay Heights is a typical Indian township which developed as a result of the Group Areas Act. Though it immediately strikes you as working class, it has a fair representation of the lower-middle-class and managerial group. The township project was started in the late 1950s and completed towards the end of the 1960s. It can therefore be regarded as having a stable population. The residents previously lived in various parts of the city and were drawn from many sectors of the Indian community. There are two types of accommodation : medium-sized three-bedroomed houses with outbuildings, garages and small gardens; and sub-economic, detached and semi-detached two-and three-bedroomed council houses, smaller in size and built on small plots of ground. The former are occupied mainly by the lower-middle-class and upper-working-class families; the latter mainly by the lower and some upper working class.

Lyndale, the area in which Orchard Lane Secondary School is situated has a different aspect. It is an older Indian suburb which existed long before the proclamation of the Group Areas Act. Though, at first glance one is tempted to label it as upper-working-class or lower-middle-class, its social composition is similar to that of Bombay Heights. Many of its inhabitants have lived here for about three or more decades, while those who have recently settled in the area are mainly tenants living in garages and outbuildings. The accommodation consists of older styled three-bedroomed cottages built of wood and iron. There are also brick-and-tile homes. By contrast with Bombay Heights, Lyndale is a wooded and spacious suburb.

However, Orchard Lane Secondary also draws its students from the surrounding areas of Parkdene, Crestridge, Duffield, Delhi Vale and Makopo. Each of these areas has different kinds of residents, but in general ranging from the lower working class to the lower middle class. Parkdene, Crestridge and Duffield are similar to Lyndale, while Delhi Vale is a recently established distinctive middle-class suburb. Makopo, on the other hand consists of many lower-income families, living in old wood-and-iron cottages in close proximity to a large African settlement of shack dwellings.

From these descriptions, it will be evident that the catchment areas of both schools include a typical representation of students from the Indian community. Ridgemount Secondary in Bombay Heights was opened in 1975, and according to its principal its "pupils come from all categories, from the highest, right down to the lowest. It has two feeder schools, and each of these caters for a different socio-economic group. One caters for children who come mainly from the higher and middle group, while the other provides mainly for children from the middle-and lower-income groups."

According to the principal of Orchard Lane which opened in 1968, "from the newly established Delhi Vale come quite sophisticated children. I noticed that these children from this élite area are career-orientated. These are the children of lawyers, doctors and teachers. There are many cultural societies in this area. The children from Lyndale are mainly average, and their parents are mostly workers. They leave all the responsibi-

lity for educating their children to the school. Duffield and Parkdene are the same. The environment in Makopo is not very stimulating. Parents do not maintain contact with the school, even if we want to see them. The children study under adverse conditions, so their performance is not that good. They have to use lamps to study and tanks to supply them with water."

The choice of these two schools was also dictated by the fact that they may be regarded as typical in terms of the matriculation results which they have produced. These are indicated in tables 1.1 and 1.2 for the period 1981-83 during which the study was conducted. These tables indicate that Orchard Lane is closer to the national average, while Ridgemount may be regarded as being marginally above the average. However, when the exemption pass rate is taken into account, it can be seen that Ridgemount has performed considerably better than Orchard Lane. The exemption is the highest grade of pass that could be achieved in the matriculation examination, and is a requirement for entrance to university and most other tertiary educational institutions.

Ridgemount therefore serves as a contrast to Orchard Lane in terms of the opportunities that are afforded to students for mobility. However, the general educational facilities available to students in both schools are similar to those in most other state schools for Indians.<sup>5(p.169)</sup> They also reflect a wide range of student abilities and teacher competencies.

TABLE 1.1

SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA  
BETWEEN 1981 TO 1983

	1981	1982	1983
1. Overall % pass ordinary grade	80	84	87
2. % Matriculation exemption pass	35	37	42
3. % Practical grade pass	95	96	95

Source : Annual Report, 1983-84 Department of Internal Affairs, Republic of South Africa. RP. 38-1985. Govt. Printer, Pretoria. Page 104.

Note : Figures have been converted to nearest whole numbers.

TABLE 1.2  
SENIOR CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION RESULTS OF THE TWO RESEARCH  
SCHOOLS, 1981-1983

	ORCHARD LANE SEC.			RIDGEMOUNT SEC.		
	1981	1982	1983	1981	1982	1983
1. Overall % pass Ordinary grade	79	80	88	94	84	94
2. % Matriculation Exemption pass	35	26	41	51	47	57
3. % Practical grade pass	97	96	93	100	100	97

Sources : Matriculation examination result sheets of Orchard Lane and Ridgemount Secondary Schools, 1981-83.

Note : Figures have been converted to nearest whole numbers.

#### 1.4 THE SAMPLE, AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES USED

The sampling of the students and events to be observed in the two schools were my main concern in the initial stage.<sup>6(p.169)</sup> The general tendency was to adopt the principles of theoretical and selective sampling, and whenever possible these were combined with the principles of random sampling.<sup>7(p. 169)</sup> The fact that the study was to be an interpretive one, spread over a long time span and that the observations were to be located in schools some distance apart, meant that selective sampling was not only a practical necessity but also theoretically mandatory. The theoretically directed sampling procedures included observations which had direct relevance for the development of a theory on career and educational pathways. However, it needs to be stressed that no clearly developed theory on the transitional process was adopted in the early stages of this study, except for commonsense knowledge about the type of settings to be studied, and a few loosely related theoretical ideas based on the discussion in Part One.

Random sampling procedures were used at various stages in the design : For example, in the selection of students and lessons to be observed, and the times during individual lessons for making intensive analysis. This was done to prevent an almost total reliance on subjective choices. It was felt that the



adoption of random sampling techniques would introduce the principle of selection by chance, and that I would be compelled to analyse such selections in an impartial way. I would have to interpret certain processes over which I have little or no control.

#### 1.4.1 Selection of Classes and Students

One ordinary grade, and one practical grade standard-eight class unit was chosen from each school on a selective basis. The inclusion of the two grades ensured that the sample would consist of students of both high and low abilities.<sup>8(p. 169)</sup> Another reason for the selection was that it is a well-known fact that educational and career opportunities presented to students from the two grades are not necessarily the same.

It was important that the ordinary grade classes should include students of various subject groupings such as the General and Science directions. In the case of Orchard Lane Secondary, it was possible to include such a class of mixed subject groupings, but unfortunately Ridgemount did not have such a class. Students were arranged according to common subject groupings. For example, Science students were placed in 8A, while General students were in 8B and 8C. It was not possible to include a Science class, as well as a General class since the inclusion would have upset the balance of the sample in the study as a whole, and would have also increased the time required for observations beyond the limits of the practical. I was therefore compelled to choose one of these two subject groups. The timetable arrangements and the range of abilities present in the 8A Science class made it the more suitable choice.

The choice of the practical grade classes in both schools posed hardly any problems. All the students in these classes followed a straight Practical Subject Course direction, which included few minor options. This meant that I could simply choose from each school one such class, with a good representation of boys and girls. Of course, the timetable arrangements of these classes had to fit in with the times which I had set aside for school visits.

The next step was to select a target population of approximately forty to fifty students spread over the four classes. This

meant that there would be approximately ten to twelve students per class. One of the ways of selecting this small number was by locating informal friendship groups within each class. The choice of such groups was dictated by the theoretical consideration that members of such informally-knit groups usually communicate much to each other about their present and future courses of action. The inclusion of such groups would mean that during individual and group discussions, it would be possible to get some insight into the cultural patterns on which individual members construct their career and educational routes.

A two-step process using random and selective principles was used in the sampling of such social relationships. Firstly, a theoretically relevant population was selected through the initial choice of schools, and the particular classes within them. Next, from within each class a boy and a girl were chosen at random. This was done to cater for differences in gender, an important factor in the explanation of educational and career choices. Each was then asked to name his or her closest friends; this resulted in two small informal groups of approximately three to four members each.

Random selection meant that there was a compulsion to accept the chosen boy or girl irrespective of social-class background, ability, popularity or unpopularity in the class, IQ and so on. Consequently it also became obligatory to accept members of his or her informal group as part of the sample. A third informal group was chosen through selective sampling. The teachers and students in each class were asked to select what they considered to be the most strongly bonded group in their class, apart from the two already chosen. With the choice of this third group, the number in each class was approximately ten to twelve, and the total number from the four classes was forty-two. However, within six months of the commencement of the study, three students were transferred to other schools, and two left school before I was able to have any communication with them. Therefore they were excluded from the final sample which numbered thirty-seven.

FIGURE 1.1  
COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

RIDGEMOUNT

PRACTICAL GRADE

<u>GROUP 1</u>	<u>GROUP 2</u>	<u>GROUP 3</u>
(Random choice)	(Random choice)	(Selective choice)
Pat	Raksha	Sundrie
David	Asha	Sheila
Ruben	Premilla (left school- omitted)	Amina (transferred to another school- omitted)

ORDINARY GRADE

<u>GROUP 1</u>	<u>GROUP 2</u>	<u>GROUP 3</u>
(Random choice)	(Random choice)	(Selective choice)
Sagren	Selvi	Rabia
Ahmed	Praba	Hafiza
Kesval	Rajen	Mary
		Veena (transferred to another school- omitted)

ORCHARD LANE

PRACTICAL GRADE

<u>GROUP 1</u>	<u>GROUP 2</u>	<u>GROUP 3</u>
(Random choice)	(Random choice)	(Selective choice)
Mayadevi	Logan	Prakash
Savy	Lennie	Devigee
Rani (left school- omitted)	Moonsamy	Kalavathees
	John	Nesan

ORDINARY GRADE

<u>GROUP 1</u>	<u>GROUP 2</u>	<u>GROUP 3</u>
(Random choice)	(Random choice)	(Selective choice)
Shireen	Juggie	Siva
Suraya	Ashok	Mohan
Saras	Jaylal	Perumal
Champa	Devan	
	Kogie (left school- omitted)	

Having followed the progress of these students from school to work, unemployment, and tertiary education, two broad groups were arrived at. The first, referred to as the **School-Leaving Group** consists of those who were employed, or unemployed or who remained at home and soon got married. The second broad group is referred to as the **Tertiary Education Group**, and is made up of those who proceeded to tertiary education. As far as the aims of this study are concerned, the latter group is really a secondary group. The School-Leaving Group consisted of twenty-five students, of whom twenty succeeded in being employed. Many of these also experienced various spells of unemployment. The other students, all girls, spent much of their time at home and some of them eventually married. Some also experienced unemployment when they initially looked for work.

The Tertiary Education Group is made up of twelve students who went to university, technikon, or college of education. The subgroups in the School Leaving Group will be referred to as the "**employed**", the "**unemployed**" and those in "**domesticity**." Though the Tertiary Education Group is not the main concern of this study, it serves to provide a comparative dimension along the parameters of class, family, gender, ability, and choice of educational pathways.

#### 1.4.2 Sampling of Events to be Observed

The next step in the sampling procedure was to select a range of events to be observed at school and the workplace. Both routine and special events were sampled in accordance with the principles suggested by Schatzman and Strauss (1973:38-43), and Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:45-53). The routine events in school included the daily lessons, while the special events included parents' meetings, guest speakers, and so on. The routine events at work included the daily activities of the jobs of these school-leavers. There were no special events in the work situations that required sampling. Details of sampling procedures used in the schools and places of employment are discussed in Chapters Five and Six, dealing with school and work.

#### 1.4.3 Sampling of Time

Having sampled the various events, it was also necessary to sample the amount of time that was to be devoted to actual observations at the various sites and sub-sites. This was a practical necessity in this study because of the wide field that had to be covered, both in space and time. However, through proper sampling of time it was hoped that a realistic amount of time might be devoted to each of the various activities in which the students were involved, so that the reality of the students' situations could be understood by spending a sufficiently long time with them.

Once again, both random and selective sampling procedures were used. These were based on my general idea about the temporal activities in all four classroom settings - something that is both routine and not too routine - and the general rhythm of time in both schools. This meant, for example, that portions of lessons which were to be observed could be broken into small units of time. This also applied to individual counselling sessions.<sup>9(p. 169)</sup>

On a more general level, I had to make certain critical decisions about where to locate myself at any given time because "important" things were happening at both schools. In this connection, Schatzman and Strauss (1973:40-1) say that "inevitably the researcher discovers that while he was observing at one sub-site something happened at another that was more 'significant' for his research; ... While such decisions must be made, proper selective sampling eventually will meet their most stringent research requirements." By visiting both schools regularly on a fortnightly basis, and during certain periods on a weekly basis, I tried to ensure that sufficient time was devoted to both settings.

#### ✓ 1.5 COLLECTION OF DATA

The data were collected in three main stages between February 1981 and the end of August 1984. The first stage was related to information gathered on school experience; the second on the influence of the family and neighbourhood; and the third on the experiences of work, and unemployment. The first two stages were completed while the students were still at school,



and the final stage took place in the period immediately after they had left school.

Data were gathered not only from the students, but also from other significant persons who knew them well; for example : their parents, teachers, and employers. In this way information obtained from more than one source was compared. This provided a means of checking the validity of the findings from different sources. Such a method of collecting data for qualitative research is known as **triangulation**,<sup>10(p. 169)</sup> and is considered to be effective in ensuring that the research findings are valid.

#### 1.5.1 Role of the Researcher

Since my role was essentially confined to observing events in natural situations, the one major participant role that seemed appropriate to adopt in the school was that of a teacher, as did Hargreaves (1967), and Lacey (1970). However, it would have been impossible to obtain a job as a teacher since I was already in full-time employment. Besides, I felt that this role would not serve my purpose. Being a teacher would have precluded me from gaining access to some of the more confidential information about the students, which I felt was essential.

It was therefore decided that I should take on the very informal role of a visiting observer within the school setting. Though my role in the home and work environments was more formal, nevertheless it was also confined to that of visiting observer. No teaching or any other official or administrative duties were allocated to me in the school, and this suited me well as I would not be seen by the students as a member of staff or any other official figure from the Education Department. Taking on such a role also meant that observation was less obtrusive, and rapport with students much easier to establish. In addition, whenever the opportunity arose I also socialised with students outside the classroom during school hours.

This kind of participant observation role suited the purpose of this study, since it brought me close to the thoughts and feelings of those who were being studied. By regularly speaking and empathizing with the students through a process of symbolic interpretation of their "**experienced culture**" I could use the

data to discover the meanings inherent in their constructions of educational and career routes. Of course, it was not always easy to play this role in a clear-cut way. There were times when it was difficult to explain to certain students, parents, employers and teachers exactly what my role was. Merely telling them that I was studying the transitional process, or that I was carrying out a project for a higher degree did not help very much. However, most persons in this study came to appreciate my role and even supported it though it was not fully grasped.

#### 1.5.2 Methods Used to Collect Data

Consistent with this role, the observation of the students at the level of action was the main method of collecting the data. This involved observations in situations inside as well as outside the school. Data collection often began with general observations. For example, in order to understand the processes of the school, and the activities of the work environment I spent a lot of time just looking and trying to understand how these structures worked. This kind of observation provided me with a background that enabled me to interpret other related data. It also guided my reading for the writing of the chapters of Part One of this study.

Notes were often written during these observations. While I was in the classrooms, for example, I wrote down what the students did and said. However, even though notes were made at the same time as I was observing, it was often impossible to write down everything I saw. The field notes were almost always accompanied by audio-tape recordings of actual lessons, individual counselling sessions, activities at places of work and so on.

While observation was the fundamental approach in the gathering of data, this research strategy on its own was inadequate. It was necessary to use several other methods: for example, group discussions, unfocussed interviews, informal conversations, review of official circulars, school magazines, newspaper cuttings and so on. The use of such a combination of methods at different stages provided a basis for triangulation of the data.

The use of such a variety of methods is illustrated by the fact that data from work settings were derived not only by observing the worker in action, but also through formal interviews

with officials of firms. In addition, formal and informal interviews, and chance conversations were held with the employees. Similar techniques were used to gather data during school visits.

The difficulty of using participant observation as an exclusive method can be judged by the fact that the events to be observed in this study were taking place in various settings simultaneously. This often made it difficult to travel from one school to the other, or from one place of employment to another in good time to observe everything that was actually taking place. On this matter, Jenkins's comments about the difficulty of using participant observation as an exclusive method of data gathering in urban, industrial social settings are applicable here :

"Interaction takes place over greater distances; not everything the researcher is interested in is as routinely available within the confines of manageable geographical areas. Furthermore, the time factor in most research usually precludes over-indulgence in participant observation, which is both labour-intensive and time-consuming, on the scale which would be required to comprehend even a small slice of an urban, industrial society, let alone a total view. Participant observation on its own is no longer enough." (Jenkins, 1983:23)

Much use was made of interviews and discussions. Students were interviewed both formally and informally at regular intervals. This included interviews with groups and also with individual students. The group interviews were conducted with each of the informal friendship groups. The formal interviews were aimed at building up a body of basic information on each individual student. However, more use was made of informal interviews with individual students, as well as with groups. These were generally unstructured, non-directional and adapted to the nature of the circumstances and the particular aspects which I was interested in. Open rather than closed questions were used to allow the students to talk about their experiences on their own terms. Several of these open questions were related to aspects that were observed as the study began to take shape. If questions had been too structured, it would have been impossible to discover the perceptions of the students. On the other hand, if there had been no structure at all the participants would have been unable to understand what I was looking for. It was therefore necessary to formulate these open questions within a broad set of guidelines.



Discussions were conducted along similar lines with teachers and employers. However, the interviews with parents at home were generally of a semi-formal nature. These informal, semi-formal and formal types of interviews were used mainly to obtain information about situations to which there was no direct access, such as events I had missed or which I was not permitted to observe. The former included discussions between parents and children at home; the latter included interviews between the workseekers and their employers.

In the latter stages of the fieldwork, when sufficient data had been collected the focus had to be narrowed. This made it necessary to engage in more formal discussions with students, teachers and employees, and covered such aspects as work experiences, the relationship between work and school, the reasons for choosing a particular job, or coping with unemployment. This meant that special sets of questions had to be designed to obtain necessary information. Nevertheless, since these questions also arose out of observations in the field, they were still closely related to issues which were salient to the students' lives.

### 1.5.3 Filing of Data

As the data began to pour in I was faced with a mounting body of field notes, and audio-cassette tape recordings. The observational field notes were carefully written and filed, and approximately two hundred and fifty audio-cassette tape recordings, each of one-hour duration had to be transcribed and filed into appropriate sections. As a first step, it was necessary to keep a running record of the sequence of events. The filing of information in this way allows any piece of data to be examined in the context of the time from which it emerged. This constituted the basic file, and thereafter it was necessary to arrange data in accordance with relevance to the main categories emerging.

As a result, the main file was sub-divided on the following lines:

- (a) individual student profiles which consisted of data on school performance, informal discussions and interviews at school, counselling sessions, home visits, visits to places of employment, and experiences of unemployment;

- (b) career-guidance lessons, and general lessons across the curriculum ;
- (c) parent-teacher meetings; visiting speakers' lectures on careers; interviews and discussions with subject teachers, counsellors, and principals; and information on the general policies of the two schools ;
- (d) group discussions with students.

The filing of these data records developed and changed as the fieldwork progressed. As the study took shape and sharpened its focus theoretical and methodological notes were also written and filed. This was done along lines suggested by Schatzman and Strauss (1973:94-106), and Sanders and Pinkey (1983:357-59). The main intention behind such a filing system was to keep a running record of information of students, and to build up profiles as they made the transition from school to work, unemployment, and tertiary education.

The data collection techniques, as well as the filing system helped me to adopt an approach based on discovery. As the research became progressively focussed, ideas and categories of meanings were developed, transformed and refined, and this in turn demanded greater selectivity in the observation and analysis.

## 1.6 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The large amount of data collected had to be reduced to manageable proportions so that the analysis would indicate the main direction in the students' perceptions of their career and educational pathways. In doing so, it was important to engage in preliminary analysis before going on to the analysis proper, and to keep in mind the scientific requirements of reliability and validity. Preliminary analysis is an essential component of qualitative research since it indicates the problems to be pursued as the study unfolds itself.

### 1.6.1 Preliminary Analysis

At the outset, a relatively concrete narrative account was produced of the routes taken by the different students. However, as the analysis became more involved, the simple narration gave way to a complex interpretation which demanded a knowledge of the students' culture and the placing of this within the

broader social context. In the early stages of the fieldwork, the descriptive accounts enabled me to pick up certain segments for analysis, enabling me to concentrate on the possible predictive lines for future analysis. Some of these initial segments included categories like reasons for **"early school leaving," "financial difficulties"** of the family, and **"the use of contacts"** in the search for work. By examining the students' experiences at school, their family backgrounds and their entry into work, this preliminary analysis focussed on certain selected themes which provided a set of issues around which to structure the analysis.

#### 1.6.2 Analysis Proper

As the analysis became more systematic, a profile was constructed for each student, and relationships were then established between theoretically relevant categories and themes which were detected in the preliminary analysis. In the case of the school-leavers, for example, each profile consisted of the following broad categories: the influence of the family, peer group and neighbourhood; school experiences, entry into work and work experiences; and the experiences of unemployment.

Analysis was undertaken to identify the broad categories of content which emerged from the collection of data through observational field notes, transcripts of interviews, discussions and so on. This involved the counting of frequencies or the number of times each category appeared in the range of content that was analysed. Essentially, such an analysis of content is an overview of free responses of individuals, and observations made in a variety of settings. It is mainly an analysis of disparate - and therefore uncontrolled - data.

This analysis in turn gave rise to certain refined and theoretically relevant content categories, such as those concerned with the crisis leading to **"early school leaving"** and the **"frustrations of looking for work,"** the **"use of contacts"** in seeking employment, the value of **"careers guidance"** for job opportunities, and the employers' **"criteria for recruitment."** Having broken up the data in this way, each piece was carefully examined and related to other pieces of data to produce an account of the transitional process. It is through this kind of analysis that:

"Intentions and motives must be located in relation to the actor's actions and statements on other occasions, to perspectives also employed by other actors, and to the situations routine and novel, which the actor faces. Beyond the narrative level, then, the search is for more abstract categories which explain the actions, intentions and motivations that occur on particular occasions." (Hammersley, 1979a:23).

The analysis was concerned with various categories of the perspectives of the students, their teachers, employers, parents and so on. In examining the interpretations of these people, certain common themes were detected, and particular types of interpretations and explanations appeared frequently. Some of these dealt with issues such as employers' perceptions of "'good' and 'bad' workers", "qualifications for jobs", students' views on "the experience of work" and so on. These important themes were then fleshed out to understand the nature of relationships such as those between employers and their workers, teachers and their students, school and work, family and job choices, and so on.

However, it should be noted that these are not causal relationships, but general patterns which seem to offer an interpretation of the transitional process. Many of these relationships have cultural interpretations. The emphasis is on how particular students interpret their career and educational choices as, for example, by reflecting on structural constraints such as the economy, the labour market, the unemployment situation, and so on.

### 1.6.3 Controls over the Data

In analysing the data certain methodological considerations had to be taken into account to present findings in an objective way. This kind of study opens itself to the criticism that it is subjective. As in the case of quantitative research, qualitative research studies are also faced with the task of presenting reliable and valid findings. In the case of the present study, reliability was achieved by checking on observations in various ways. Validity was taken to be what was selected for analysis as the most appropriate representation of the actors' perspectives. Checks of reliability and validity were built in during different phases of the fieldwork. Such checks included the use of techniques to detect "fronts" that the students



may have assumed, and inconsistencies in their actions and words; to reduce bias wherever possible; and to produce a reflexive account of my own role in the production of the findings.

It was important not to be naive in accepting appearances at face value. There were instances when data taken from different contexts revealed inconsistencies, misconceptions, and sometimes self deception. For example, what the students said and did in one context differed from what happened in other contexts. This occurred in some individual and group interviews that I conducted; during visits to homes and places of employment; and during counselling sessions.

To account for such variations I had to adopt a model of multiple perspectives. This meant comparing and contrasting the views and actions of each actor in the different contexts in which this person was observed. In addition, perhaps the most important form of control was the length of time spent in the field. Being regularly in contact with the students for such a long time, and observing them in different settings meant that it was very difficult for anyone to maintain a "front" for any length of time.

However, the task of overcoming bias was more difficult. Eliminating all possible bias from any kind of social research is an impossible task to achieve. The analysis in this study involved a great deal of selection and interpretation of data. This, of course, meant that the greater the production of the data, the greater the possibilities of closing off possible alternative interpretations. Selection could not be avoided but the best that could be done was to try to minimize it and, as far as possible, to make explicit the basis on which selections were made. This meant that I had to impose certain controls on my choices by setting my own interpretations within the context of a network of other interpretations in this study. Many constructions of meanings had to be compared and contrasted. These included those of the various participants, as well as my own. For example, I had to sift out the meanings of teachers, pupils, principals, guidance counsellors, and parents. It was important not to impose my own interpretations upon those of other people.

Lastly, it was clear throughout this study that the relationship between myself and the participants could never be completely

neutralized. The subtle effects of my presence and the techniques employed by me; for example, the use of a tape recorder always posed problems for the way in which I was going to interpret the data. Since I was an essential part of the research field, my presence and actions had to be regularly documented to assess their effects on the students and other significant persons. This meant that the circumstances which gave rise to data collected had to be carefully scrutinised. The data could not be taken at face value, as unproblematically representing the process it is supposed to describe. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:14-19) refer to this aspect of qualitative research as **reflexivity**.

### 1.7 GENERATING THEORY

While data were collected and analysed, theoretical assumptions were being made about the meanings of particular events or actions and the connections between them. Theory was generated out of the actions of people who were experiencing, asking questions, and making decisions. Instead of starting out with patterns of received theory, the aim was to offer explanations of the transitional process that reflects the pattern of the real world of the students. This meant that there was constant interaction between the data and the theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967:28-32) say that by approaching the problem in this open-ended, context-sensitive way, and by probing deeper into the relationships and interactions, greater illumination and insight is possible. Patterns in the data which were theoretically significant were tested against further data.

By examining certain occurrences within the school and within the work situation, these patterns produced a theory about the transition from school to work. However, before such a model could be developed, it was first necessary to understand the processes that applied to the whole range of selected students, and then to make inferences from the various case studies, and to focus on certain common elements.

This process of theory building continued throughout the study until the emerging model became more and more developed, with categories such as class, family background, race, gender, early school leaving, and so on, being related to one another in various ways. As the diverse properties showed signs of becoming integrated, it was clear that a theoretical explanation

could be attempted. According to Glaser and Strauss (1968:109):

"... the theory develops, as different categories and their properties tend to become integrated through constant comparisons that force the analyst to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison."

#### 1.8 WRITING THE EMPIRICAL REPORT

The form in which the empirical chapters are written is largely a reflection of the particular direction taken in the field. The style is typically that of most qualitative research studies - descriptive, analytical and illustrated wherever possible with quotations and relevant extracts. The report is structured around certain major themes which emerged as the fieldwork progressed.

The standard pattern of reporting adopted by quantitative studies was inappropriate because of the diverse and discovery-based character of this study. A strict pattern or order could not be followed in stating the hypotheses to be tested, or the research procedures to be used. Quotations were selected to illustrate the main arguments; and these are given for each stage of the analysis, and are representative of the body of data used.

# NOTES

1. The senior secondary phase of school includes the final three years, embracing standards eight, nine and ten. At the end of this phase students sit for the Senior Certificate Examination which may be taken with or without Matriculation Exemption. Those with exemption passes are eligible for admission to university and other tertiary education institutions.
2. Pseudonyms have been used for the schools, the suburbs, and the students in the sample. This had to be done as guarantees for keeping information confidential, as well as concealing the identities of the participants were some of the conditions under which I was permitted to conduct this study.  
  
The pseudonyms chosen reflect both the nature of the Indian background of the study as well as the influence of western culture on Indians in South Africa. The names of the students - as well as those of the schools - resemble the names which occur in the neighbourhoods where this study was undertaken.
3. This process of negotiating and gaining access continues throughout the entire area of fieldwork in qualitative research. Bogdan and Taylor (1975:31) say that it is not achieved once and for all on initial entry to the setting. In the present study access had to be gained to a variety of settings such as the students' homes, places of employment, parents' meetings, counselling sessions and so on. These are discussed in the forthcoming chapters.
4. Chapter Three of Part One of this study gives an indication of the occupational structure of Indian South Africans. Table 3.3 (p. 48) shows that in 1980 40.6 per cent were production, transport workers and labourers, while 20.7 per cent were in clerical and related jobs. A study conducted by Naicker (1979:143) on pupils and their home backgrounds in one of the southern suburbs of Durban revealed that 53 per cent of pupils belonged to the lower working class, 22 per cent to the upper working class, 24 per cent to the lower middle class, and 2 per cent to the upper middle class.



5. Indian state schools in South Africa are controlled by a single education authority - the **Department of Education and Culture, House of Delegates**. It was previously known as the **Division of Indian Education, Department of Internal Affairs**, and before that as the **Department of Indian Affairs**.
6. The procedures discussed in this chapter refer only to the initial design of the study. It should be noted that sampling did not end at this stage. As the study progressed, certain other relevant events had to be progressively sampled. This meant, for example, sampling events in the work situation. Such sampling procedures are discussed in other chapters of this section of the study. Progressive sampling of events and persons, which is typical of qualitative research studies is discussed by Denzin (1970:82).
7. The principles of theoretical and selective sampling which were adopted in this study are those derived from the discussions by Glaser and Strauss (1967:45-60); Denzin (1970:82-6), and Bogdan and Taylor (1975:27-8).
8. Selection for the practical and ordinary grade classes at the end of standard five is based on examination performance. The more able students are placed in the ordinary grade.
9. Time-sampling procedures were essential to this study because of the sheer bulk of data available. The period of time to be devoted to collecting and recording certain events had to be limited if I was to avoid being inundated with data that I would never be able to analyse.  
The details concerning the breakdown of lessons, and individual counselling sessions into units of time are discussed in Chapter Five.
10. **Triangulation** is a term derived from an analogy with navigation and surveying. In explaining this, Hammersley (1982 :29-30) says : "For someone wanting to locate their position on a map with the aid of a compass, a single landmark can only provide the information that they are situated somewhere along a line in a particular direction from that landmark. With two landmarks, however, one's exact position can usually be pinpointed by taking bearings on both landmarks: one is located on the map where the two lines cross. In social research, if one relies on a single source of data there is the danger

that undetected error in the data production process may render the analysis incorrect. If, on the other hand, diverse kinds of data lead to the same conclusion, one can be a little more confident in that conclusion."

Denzin (1970:26-7), Davies et al. (1985:306-8), Cohen and Manion (1986:254:70) also discuss the strategy of methodological triangulation.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE2.1 NUMERICAL DISTRIBUTION AND SEX COMPOSITION

Of the original total of forty-two students selected from both schools, nineteen were from Ridgemount and twenty-three from Orchard Lane. Within the first six months of this study three students were no longer at Ridgemount and had to be omitted from the sample. These included two girls from the practical grade, and one from the ordinary grade. One of the girls left school and stayed at home, while the other two were transferred to distant schools. This meant that eventually Ridgemount was left with sixteen pupils.

A few months after the commencement of the study one of the girls from the practical grade, and another from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane left school and stayed at home. They had to be excluded from the sample which was reduced to twenty-one. Table 2.1 indicates the numerical distribution of the sample in the two schools.

TABLE 2.1  
NUMERICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE

SCHOOL	GRADE	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Ridgemount	Ordinary	4	5	9
	Practical	3	4	7
	TOTAL	7	9	16
Orchard Lane	Ordinary	7	4	11
	Practical	6	4	10
	TOTAL	13	8	21
	GRAND TOTAL	20	17	37

2.2 SOCIAL-CLASS COMPOSITION

The sampling procedures used in this study were not deliberately designed for the selection of students according to social-class background. However, once the selection was done, it was found that the composition in both schools roughly approximated to the occupational structure of Bombay Heights and Lyndale, and of Durban. About two-thirds of the sample in each school was

made up of the upper and lower working class. Table 2.2 gives an indication of the social-class composition in both schools.

A four-fold classification of occupations has been used to describe the social-class background of the families, and the kinds of occupations which the students entered. This classification can be regarded as a scale, the jobs being arranged according to status, with the semi-skilled jobs of the lower working class at the bottom. Above the semi-skilled are the skilled or upper-working-class, lower-middle-class, and upper-middle-class occupations.

The scale used to map the occupations of Indian school-leavers, and those of their parents, appears to be approximately in line with the approaches adopted by Hall and Jones (1950:31-55); Moser and Hall (1954:29-50); Goldthorpe and Hope (1974); Coxon and Jones (1979:56-92); and Stopforth and Schlemmer (1978:14-69). The details of this classification are presented in Appendix 1.

TABLE 2.2  
SOCIAL-CLASS COMPOSITION OF SAMPLE

SOCIAL CLASS	RIDGEMOUNT		ORCHARD LANE	
	PRACTICAL	ORDINARY	PRACTICAL	ORDINARY
Upper Middle Class	0	1	0	1
Lower Middle Class	0	5	3	3
Upper Working Class	4	1	3	3
Lower Working Class	3	2	4	4
TOTAL	7	9	10	11

The distribution in this table indicates the heavier concentration of the working classes in the practical grade in both schools. In Ridgemount all the practical grade students were from either the upper or lower working class. Most of the students in the ordinary grade at Ridgemount were from the middle class. The ordinary grade in Orchard Lane had a smaller number of such students. Since the proportion of boys and girls from each of the social classes in all four classes in the two schools was more or less evenly balanced, it was considered unnecessary to show this distribution.

Twenty-two of the school-leavers were from the working class. Twelve belonged to the lower working class, and ten to the upper working class. Three were from the lower middle class.

Of the twelve students in the tertiary education group, two were from the working class, one belonged to the lower working class, and the other to the upper working class. Ten were from the middle class, with eight from the lower middle class, and two from the upper middle class.

### 2.3 ETHNIC COMPOSITION

Twenty-eight students of the entire sample are Hindus. The rest are made up of three Muslims and six Christians. All the Muslim students were from the ordinary grade at Ridgemount. Two of the Christian students were from the practical grade in Orchard Lane, and four from Ridgemount. Of these, one was from the ordinary grade and three from the practical grade.

This distribution of the religious groups differ from that of the national figures shown in table 4.1 of Part One of this thesis (page 78). According to the 1980 census figures shown in this table, Hindus comprise approximately 62 per cent, Muslims 19 per cent and Christians 12 per cent.

Of the twenty-one students in Orchard Lane nineteen are Hindus, while two are Christians. At Ridgemount, nine of the sixteen students are Hindus, three are Muslims, and four are Christians. There was a heavier concentration of Hindus in the sample at Orchard Lane.

However, what was most striking was the high percentage of Hindus amongst the working-class school-leavers in the entire sample. Seventeen of the twenty-two working-class students in this category are Hindus, while five are Christians. This is not surprising since the history of the Indian settlement in Natal reveals that the bulk of the descendants of the indentured group are Hindus, and the rest are mainly Christians. The Muslims belong to the affluent passenger group. All three Muslim students in this study belonged to the tertiary education group.

Other facts worth noting about the ethnic nature of the sample are that eleven of the twelve lower-working-class school-leavers



are Hindus, while ten upper-working-class school-leavers also belong to this religious group. The number of Christian students was low: the upper-working-class group had four, and the lower-working-class group had one. Of the twelve tertiary education students, three are Muslims, one is a Christian and eight are Hindus.

No serious effort was made in the empirical analysis in the forthcoming chapters to focus on the ethnic differences in the sample. It would have been pointless to over-emphasise cultural differences based on ethnicity because of the small number of Muslim students who came from one standard in one of the two schools. Another reason was that approximately all the Christian students are recent converts, and their backgrounds are similar to those of the Hindu students in many respects. Thus the analysis of the Hindu and Christian students taken together is essentially an analysis of the culture of the descendants of the indentured Indians. This is basically the school-leaving group in this study.

#### 2.4 ABILITY RANGE AND SUBJECT CHOICES

The ability range of the students was judged from their cumulative performances in the end of year examinations between standards eight and ten. Each of the two grades had its own examinations, and because the students were streamed according to ability the practical grade examinations were not as demanding as those of the ordinary grade. The marks of each student were averaged, and three broad categories of ability were arrived at. Those who obtained 60 per cent and above were considered to be **very good**. Those between 50 to 59 per cent were regarded as **good**, and those below 50 per cent as **average**. This breakdown was based on the fact that a 40 per cent aggregate was taken to be the pass mark in the final examinations in both schools. Table 2.3 (p. 175) indicates the ability range of the sample.

This analysis made it clear that the practical grade standards in both schools did not have any students who were very good; whereas there were four such students in the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane, and two at Ridgemount. This was a clear indication of streaming according to ability, those of lower abilities were segregated into the practical grade standards. On the whole, it may be said that the sample reflected an even distribution of students of different ability levels in both grades in each of the two schools.

TABLE 2.3  
ABILITY GROUPS IN BOTH SCHOOLS

ABILITY GROUPS	ORCHARD LANE				RIDGEMOUNT			
	PRACTICAL		ORDINARY		PRACTICAL		ORDINARY	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Very good (60%+)	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	2
Good (50% to 59%)	3	2	1	3	1	3	3	1
Average (49% & below)	3	2	3	0	2	1	1	2
TOTAL	6	4	7	4	3	4	4	5

As far as the choice of subjects and courses was concerned, six of the eleven students in the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane, chose the S 7 course. These six students are all males. The S 7 course is science-orientated, with physical science, mathematics and biology being the main core subjects. Other subjects include English, Afrikaans, and accountancy. The remaining five students, of whom four are girls, took the G 57 course. This is a general course which includes English, Afrikaans, mathematics, biology, accountancy and typing. The various subjects in the ordinary grade courses could be taken on the **higher grade**, and **standard grade** levels. Higher grade levels are chosen by those who wish to obtain Matriculation Exemption, and thereby qualify for admission to tertiary education institutions.

All nine students in the ordinary grade at Ridgemount took science courses. Of these, five took the S 7 courses, three the S 2, and one the S 10. In the S 7 course, there were three girls and two boys. One girl and two boys took the S 2 course, and the S 10 course was taken by a girl. The core subjects in the S 2 course are mathematics, physical science, biology, and geography, while the S 10 course is built around physical science, biology, mathematics and music. Both the S 2 and S 10 also include English and Afrikaans.

The practical grade courses in both schools showed little variation. At Orchard Lane all the boys took salesmanship, industrial arts and accountancy, while all the girls took mothercraft, housecraft and accountancy. In addition to these core subjects, the rest of the curriculum was made up of English, Afrikaans, mathematics, science, history and geography.

At Ridgemount, the boys' curriculum was built around accountancy, business methods, and technical drawing or metalwork. The core subjects for the girls were accountancy, business methods and housecraft. As in the case of Orchard Lane, the rest of the practical grade curriculum for the boys and the girls consisted of English, Afrikaans, science, history, geography and mathematics.

## 2.5 THE EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER PATHWAYS OF THE STUDENTS

### 2.5.1 The School-Leavers

The school-leavers consisted of those who had left school before completing standard ten, as well as those who had completed standard ten, and got jobs straightaway, or who had been unemployed. Altogether, there were twenty-five school-leavers. Sixteen of them were from Orchard Lane, and nine from Ridgemount. The Orchard Lane students were made up of seven from the ordinary grade and nine from the practical grade. The Ridgemount students consisted of two from the ordinary grade, and seven from the practical grade. A striking fact was that sixteen of these school-leavers were from the practical grade.

When the entire group was divided according to social class, it was found that the bulk was from the working class. Twelve were from the lower working class, ten from the upper working class, and three from the lower middle class. There were almost equal numbers of boys and girls from these different social-class groups. Thirteen of the working-class school-leavers were from Orchard Lane, while nine were from Ridgemount. The majority of this group, numbering fourteen, were from the practical grade. The three middle-class school-leavers were from Orchard Lane, and this included two from the practical grade, and one from the ordinary grade.

The twenty-five school-leavers left at various stages between standards eight and ten. In the account which follows, brief descriptions are given of each of these groups of students.

#### 2.5.1.1 School-Leavers in Standard Eight

Four students left while they were in standard eight. All of them were from the practical grade, and were split equally between the two schools. Two of these, Lennie and Raksha, were from the lower working class, while Sheila was from the upper working class. Prakash was from the lower middle class.

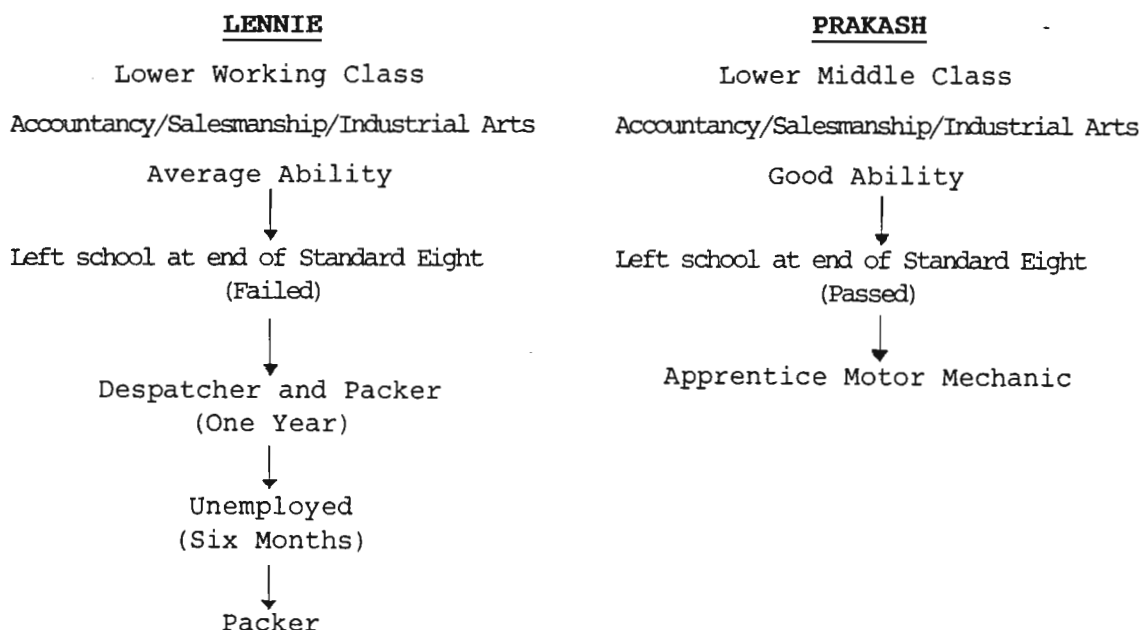


The pathways in figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 indicate the following about each of the school-leavers: social class, course of study, ability, stage of school-leaving, jobs obtained and periods of employment, periods of unemployment and domesticity (in the case of some girls). The last occupation mentioned was the one in which the school-leaver was when the study was terminated.

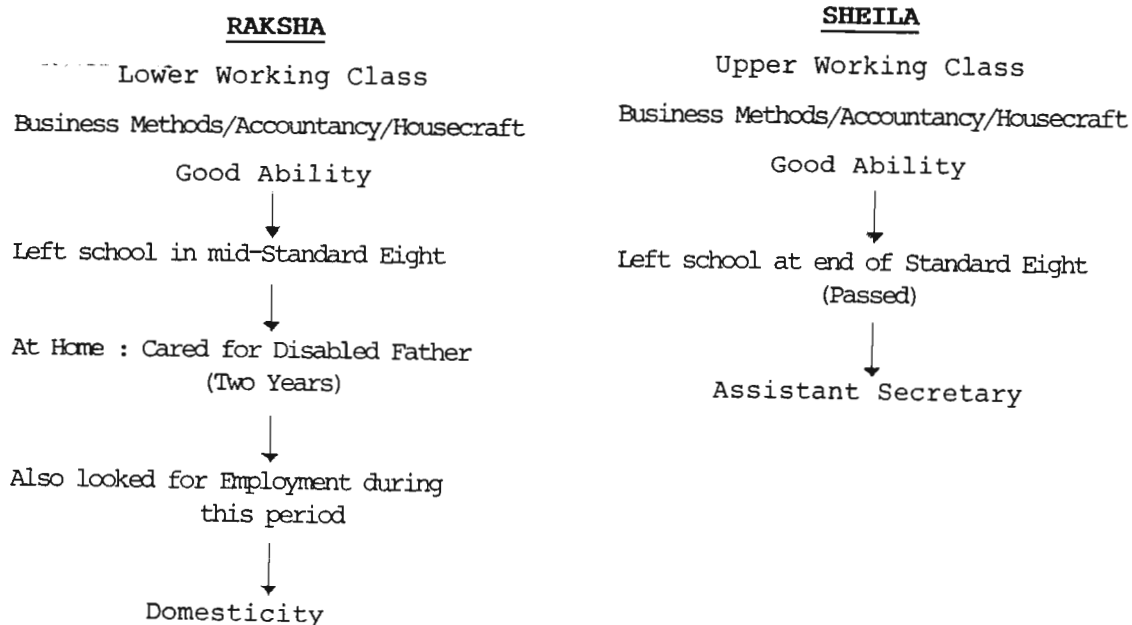
FIGURE 2.1

PATHWAYS OF STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL IN STANDARD EIGHT

ORCHARD LANE : PRACTICAL GRADE



RIDGEMOUNT : PRACTICAL GRADE



Of the two lower-working-class students, Lennie entered semi-skilled work, while Raksha ended up in domesticity. Prakash, from the lower middle class, got an upper-working-class job; while Sheila, from the upper working class, got a lower-middle-class job.

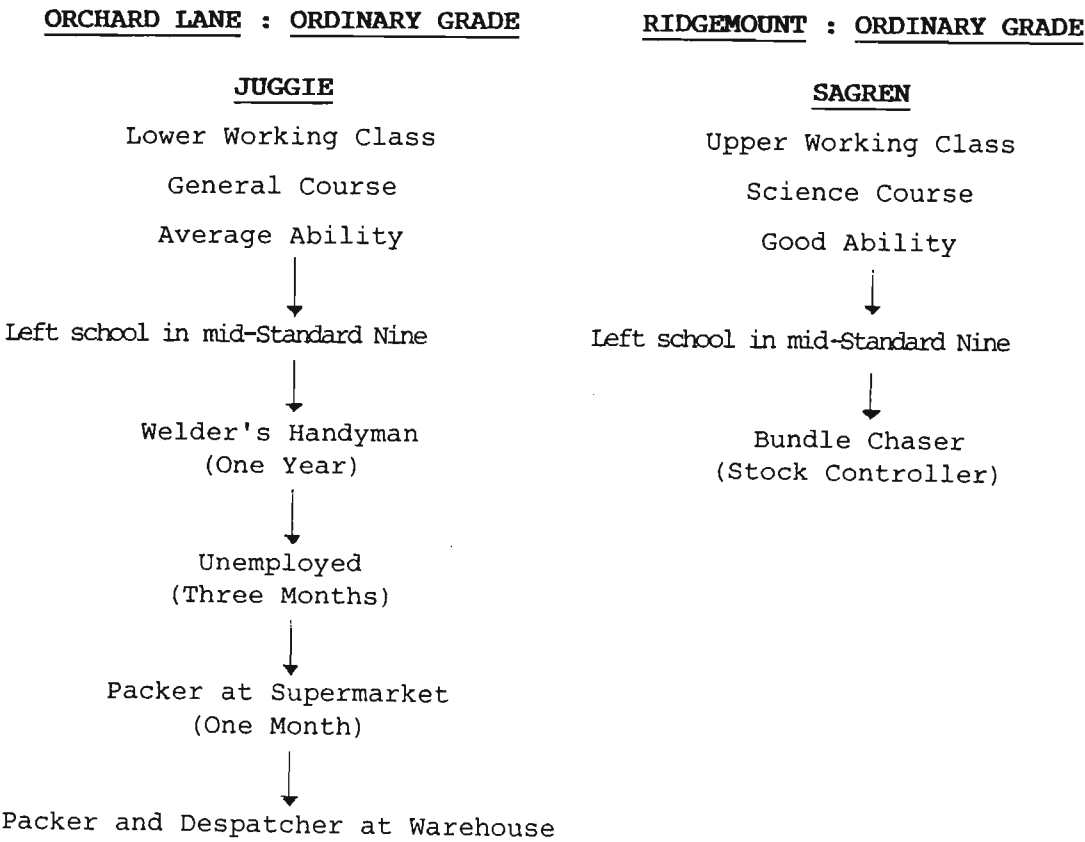
2.5.1.2 School-Leavers in Standard Nine

Seven students left in standard nine. Four of these were from Orchard Lane, and three from Ridgemount. Two were from the ordinary grade, and five from the practical grade. One of the ordinary grade students was from Orchard Lane, and the other came from Ridgemount. These were boys. Of the five practical grade students, three were boys and were from Orchard Lane. The other two were girls and belonged to Ridgemount.

Of the entire group, five were from the lower working class, and included Juggie, Logan, Moonsamy, Asha and Sundrie. Two belonged to the upper working class, and these were Sagren and John. The ordinary grade students consisted of one from the lower working class, and one from the upper working class. Of the practical grade students, four were from the lower working class, and one from the upper working class.

FIGURE 2.2

PATHWAYS OF STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL IN STANDARD NINE



ORCHARD LANE : PRACTICAL GRADELOGAN

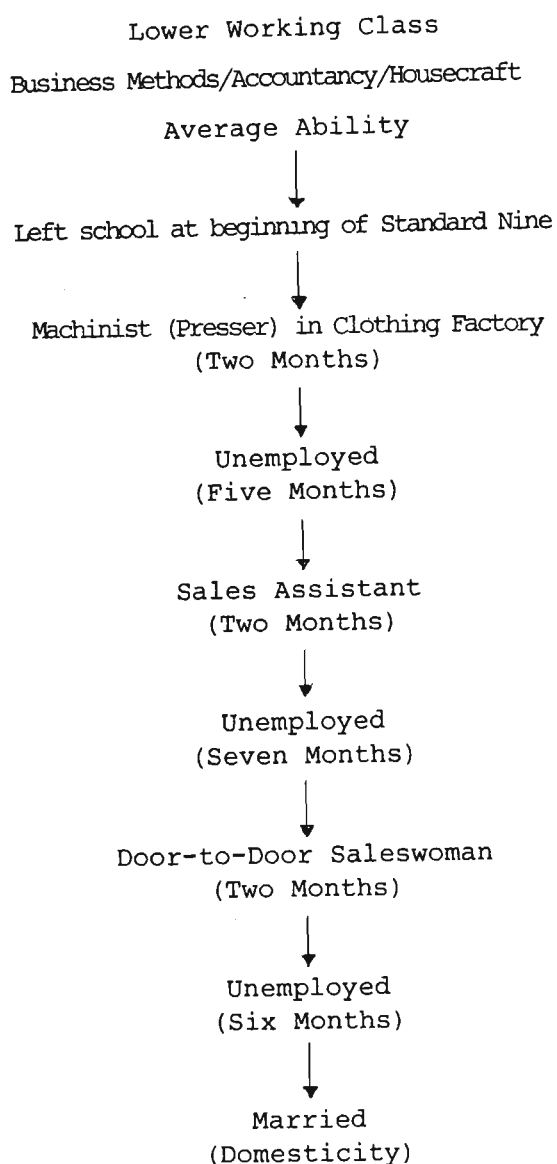
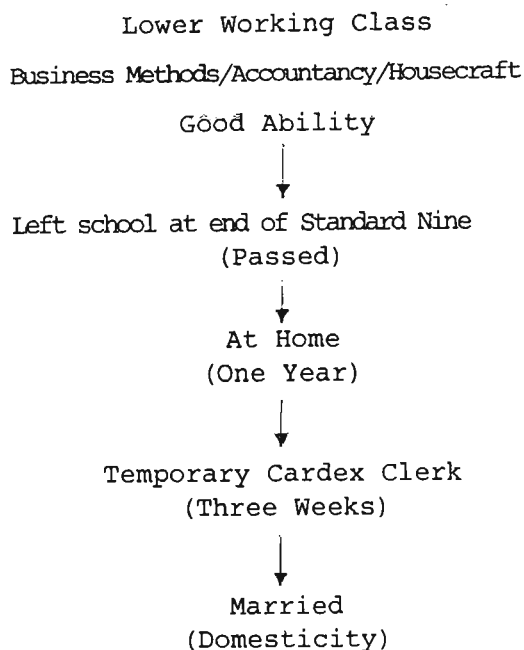
Lower Working Class  
 Accountancy/Salesmanship/Industrial Arts  
 Average Ability  
 ↓  
 Left school in mid-Standard Nine  
 ↓  
 Counterhand at Video Shop  
 (Three Years)  
 ↓  
 Unemployed  
 (One Month)  
 ↓  
 Cleaner and Errand Boy

MOONSAMY

Lower Working Class  
 Accountancy/Salesmanship/Industrial Arts  
 Average Ability  
 ↓  
 Left school at end of Standard Nine  
 (Passed)  
 ↓  
 Upholsterer's Handyman

JOHN

Upper Working Class  
 Accountancy/Salesmanship/Industrial Arts  
 Good Ability  
 ↓  
 Left school in mid-Standard Nine  
 ↓  
 Unemployed  
 (One Year)  
 ↓  
 Packer and Despatcher  
 (One Week)  
 ↓  
 Handyman  
 (Three Weeks)  
 ↓  
 Apprentice Shopfitter

RIDGEMOUNT : PRACTICAL GRADEASHASUNDRIE

Four of the five lower-working-class students entered semi-skilled work, while the fifth, a girl, remained at home and got married. One of the two upper-working-class students entered a lower-middle-class job, while the other got an upper-working-class job.

2.5.1.3 School-Leavers in Standard Ten

Fourteen students left school in standard ten. Ten were from Orchard Lane, and four from Ridgemount. The Orchard Lane students consisted of six from the ordinary grade, and four from the practical grade. The Ridgemount students consisted of one from the ordinary grade, and three from the practical grade. When both schools were considered together, it was noticed that there were three boys and four girls from the ordinary grade. One of the boys was from Ridgemount, while all the girls were from Orchard Lane. The practical grade students consisted of

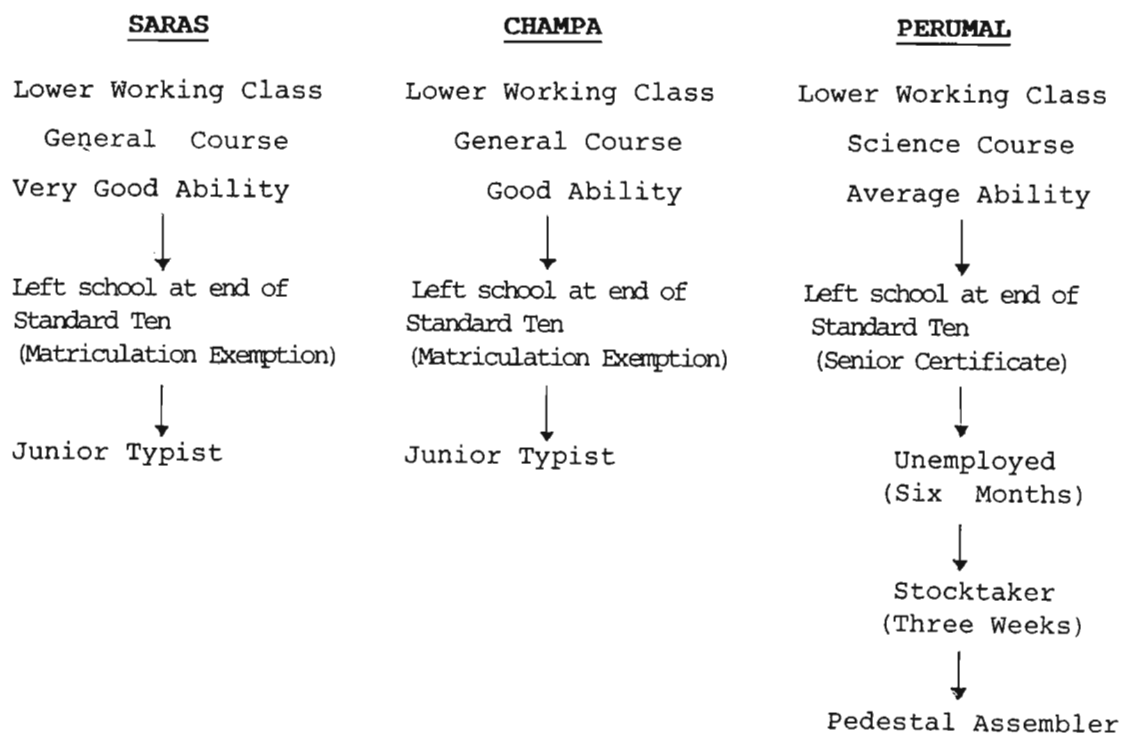
three girls, all of whom were from Orchard Lane, and four boys, of whom three were from Ridgemount.

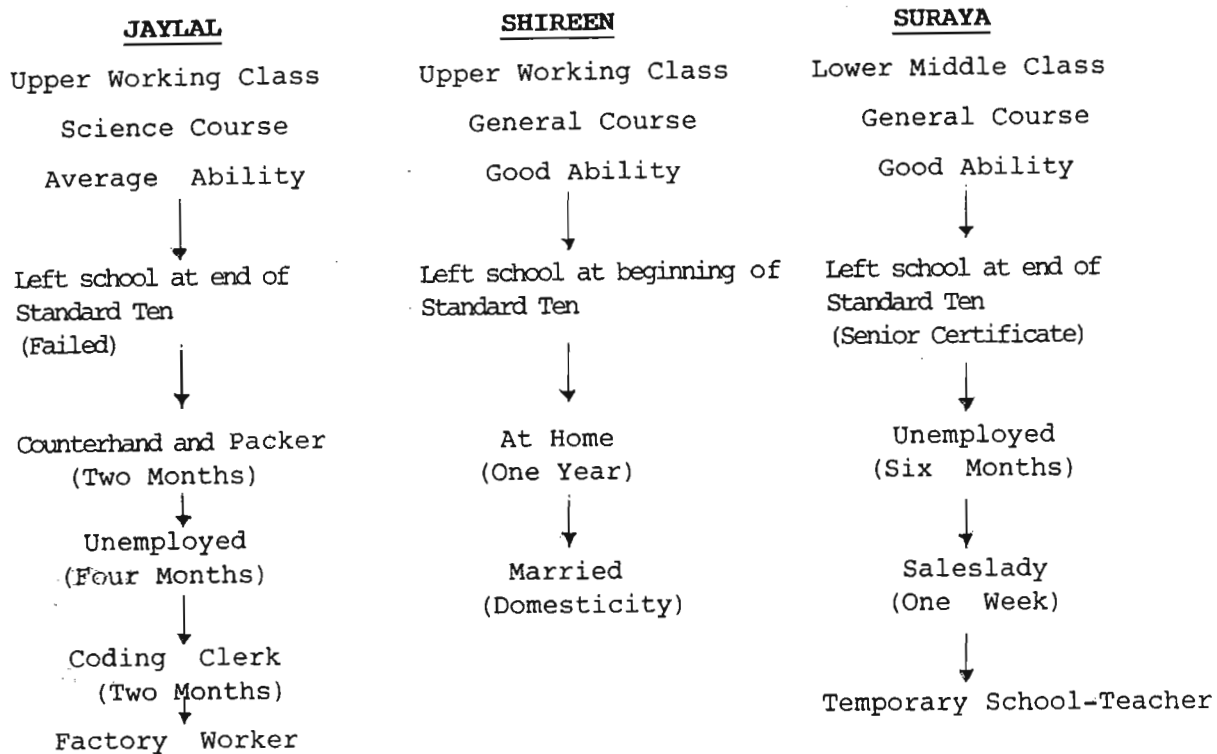
Five of the fourteen students were from the lower working class. These included Kesval, Saras, Champa, Perumal and Savy. Seven were from the upper working class, and included Mayadevi, Jaylal, Pat, David, Ruben, Shireen, and Kalavathee. The remaining two were lower-middle-class students, and these were Nesan and Suraya. The overall picture was that the bulk of the students belonged to the working class. Six of the ordinary grade students were working-class, and there was an equal number of practical grade students from the same social class. There was one middle-class student in each of the two grades.

FIGURE 2.3

PATHWAYS OF STUDENTS WHO LEFT SCHOOL IN STANDARD TEN

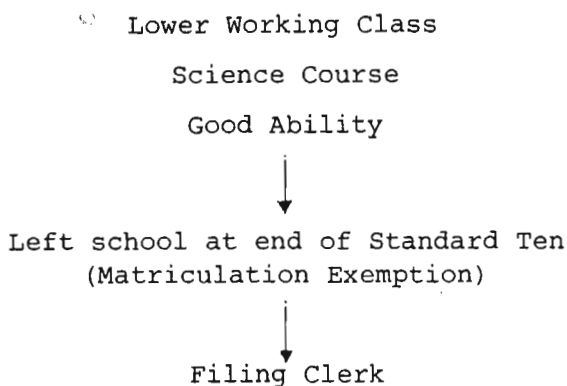
ORCHARD LANE : ORDINARY GRADE



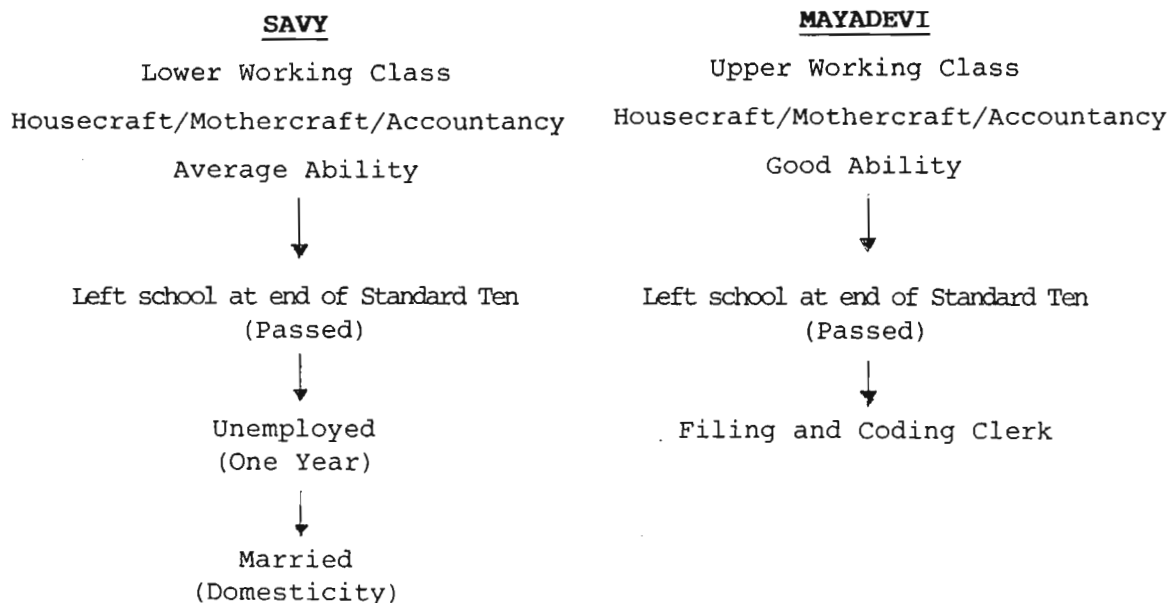


RIDGEMOUNT : ORDINARY GRADE

KESVAL



ORCHARD LANE : PRACTICAL GRADE



KALAVATHEE

Upper Working Class  
Housecraft/Mothercraft/Accountancy

Average Ability

Left school at end of Standard Ten  
(Passed)

At Home  
(One Month)

Married  
(Domesticity)

NESAN

Lower Middle Class  
Accountancy/Salesmanship/Industrial Arts

Good Ability

Left school at end of Standard Ten  
(Passed)

Apprentice Cabinet-Maker  
(Three Months)

Unemployed  
(One Month)

Data Processing Clerk  
(One Month)

Unemployed

RIDGEMOUNT : PRACTICAL GRADEPAT

Upper Working Class  
Accountancy/Business Methods/  
Technical Drawing

Average Ability

Left school at end of  
Standard Ten  
(Passed)

Unemployed  
(Six Months)

Stores Clerk (Despatcher)  
(Two Weeks)

Unemployed  
(Two Months)

DAVID

Upper Working Class  
Accountancy/Business Methods/  
Metalwork

Good Ability

Left school at end of  
Standard Ten  
(Passed)

Panel-Beater  
(One Week)

Unemployed  
(Six Months)

Shank Controller  
(Three Months)

Despatcher and Sales  
Assistant

RUBEN

Upper Working Class  
Accountancy/Business Methods/  
Technical Drawing

Average Ability

Left school at end of  
Standard Ten  
(Passed)

Unemployed  
(Six Months)

Switchboard Operator  
(One Month)

Unemployed  
(One Month)

Packer

Of the lower-working-class students, three who were in the ordinary grade entered lower-middle-class jobs. Of the remaining two, one entered semi-skilled work, while the other, a girl from the practical grade, soon got married and became a housewife. Of the seven upper-working-class students, two entered lower-middle-class jobs, three got semi-skilled work, while two girls remained



at home and got married. One of the two middle-class students got an upper-working-class job, while the other got a lower-middle-class job.

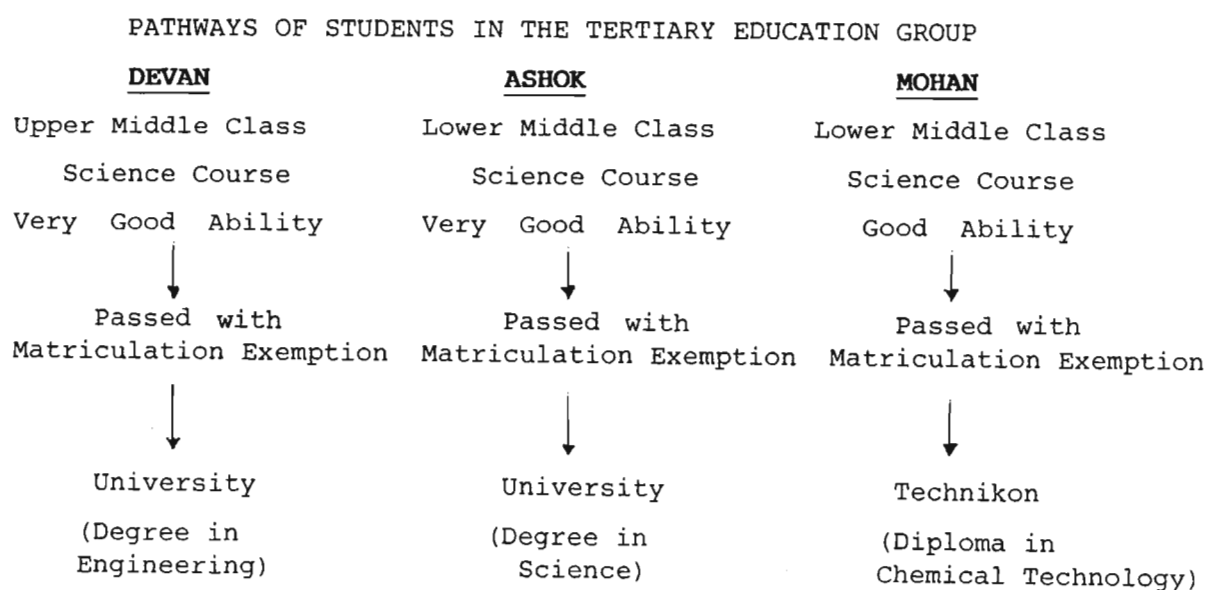
### 2.5.2 The Tertiary Education Group

The majority of those who continued with their education beyond standard ten entered tertiary education institutions in Durban. There were ten such students. One prepared to enter university in Pakistan, and another enrolled at a local fashion-designing school. All of these students were from the ordinary grade. Five were from Orchard Lane, and seven from Ridgemount.

Of this group of twelve students, the majority belonged to the middle class. Two were from the upper middle class, and eight from the lower middle class. One was from the upper working class, and one from the lower working class.

The upper-middle-class students were Devan from Orchard Lane, and Hafiza from Ridgemount. The eight lower-middle-class students included five from Ridgemount, and three from Orchard Lane. The Ridgemount students were Ahmed, Rajen, Selvi, Rabia and Mary. The Orchard Lane students were Ashok, Mohan and Devigee. The upper-working-class student was Siva from Orchard Lane, and the lower-working-class student was Praba from Ridgemount.

FIGURE 2.4





DEVIGEE

Lower Middle Class  
 Mothercraft/Housecraft/Accountancy  
 (Practical Grade)  
 Good Ability  
 ↓  
 Transferred to Ordinary Grade in  
 Standard Eight  
 ↓  
 General Course  
 ↓  
 Passed with Senior Certificate  
 ↓  
 Fashion Academy  
 (Diploma in Dress Designing)

SIVA

Upper Working Class  
 Science Course  
 Very Good Ability  
 ↓  
 Passed with Matriculation Exemption  
 ↓  
 Technikon  
 (Diploma in Computer Science)

RIDGEMOUNT : ORDINARY GRADEHAFIZA

Upper Middle Class  
 Science Course  
 Good Ability  
 ↓  
 Passed with  
 Matriculation Exemption  
 ↓  
 College of Education  
 (Diploma in Primary  
 Education)

AHMED

Lower Middle Class  
 Science Course  
 Average Ability  
 ↓  
 Passed with  
 Senior Certificate  
 ↓  
 Preparation for Admis-  
 sion to University in  
 Pakistan

RAJEN

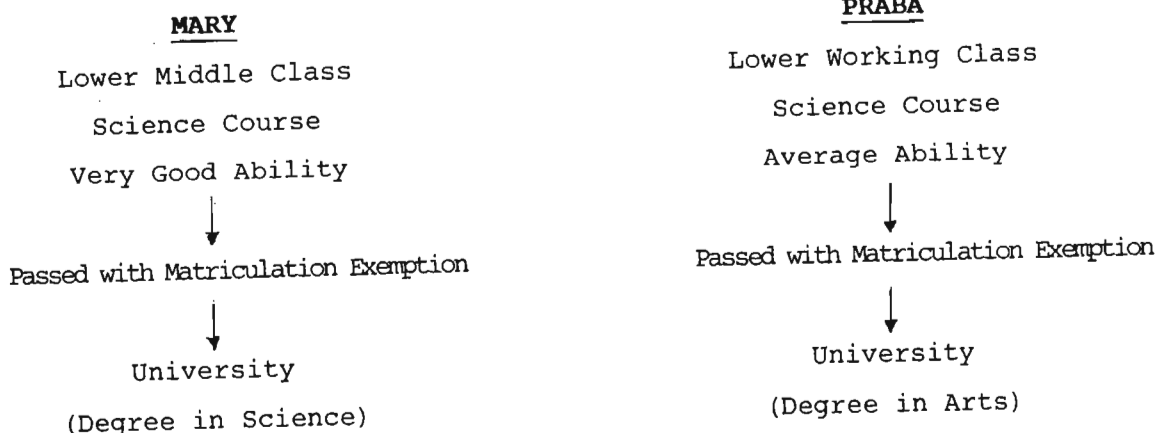
Lower Middle Class  
 Science Course  
 Good Ability  
 ↓  
 Passed with  
 Matriculation Exemption  
 ↓  
 University  
 (Degree in Adminis-  
 tration)

SELVI

Lower Middle Class  
 Science Course  
 Average Ability  
 ↓  
 Passed with Matriculation Exemption  
 ↓  
 University  
 (Degree in Arts)

RABIA

Lower Middle Class  
 Science Course  
 Very Good Ability  
 ↓  
 Passed with Matriculation Exemption  
 ↓  
 University  
 (Degree in Science)



## 2.6 CONCLUSION

The school-leavers constituted approximately two thirds or 68 per cent of the total sample in this study. There were fourteen boys and eleven girls in this group. The majority (sixteen) were from the practical grade, and belonged mainly to the lower working class. Ten students were from the upper working class, and there were almost equal numbers of boys and girls in the whole group, as well as in each of the different social-class groups. The school-leaving group was also made up exclusively of Hindus and a few Christians.

Since the majority was from the practical grade, the students in this grade were mainly those of average and slightly above average abilities. The practical grade in both schools revealed a heavy concentration of working-class students. There was hardly any variation in the provision of courses and subjects in this grade, and this placed a severe restriction on the career and educational routes which were available to these students.

The numbers of boys and girls who left school at different stages were almost the same, with the exception of standard nine. At this stage, more boys (five) than girls (two) left. Some of the jobs which the girls obtained were: assistant to secretary, counterhand, door-to-door saleswoman, junior typist, temporary school-teacher, and filing and coding clerk. A few entered domesticity. Most of the boys, especially those from the lower working class, got semi-skilled jobs such as packers, despatchers, cleaners and errand boys, handymen, and assemblers. A few were employed as apprentices (cabinet-maker, shopfitter,

and motor mechanic). Others got jobs as stores clerks, stock controllers, filing clerks, and data processing clerks.

When the educational and career pathways are seen in terms of social mobility, one gets some idea of the reproductive functions of social class. As pointed out previously, it was mainly the lower-working-class boys, and especially those from the practical grade, who were destined for semi-skilled work. Among those who soon got married and became housewives were girls from this social-class group. The few lower-working-class students who got low-middle-class jobs were from the ordinary grade.

Among the upper working class there was some upward, as well as downward, mobility. There were almost equal numbers who entered lower-middle-class and semi-skilled jobs. A few upper-working-class girls were also destined for domesticity.

The tertiary education group was dominated by the middle-class. There were only two working-class students in this group, one of whom was from the lower working class. The middle-class character of the tertiary education group contrasted strongly with the large number of working-class students among the school-leavers.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### 3. SEVEN LIVES

##### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter uses detailed information in the form of case histories to present the characteristics of certain types of students, and how they experienced the transitional process. The examples taken are those of particular students from the school-leaving group, and these provide detailed accounts of many of the aspects discussed in the remaining chapters. Drawn from the fieldwork, these examples illustrate the way in which various students were categorised in school, their family backgrounds, their occupational aspirations, and their experiences of work and unemployment.

A variety of significant characteristics of the transitional process were evident in the analysis of this study, and some of these are illustrated here through the material provided by seven reasonably typical students. These, however are not extreme examples, and many of their characteristics are shared by others in the school-leaving group.

These case studies are presented in the form of profiles. A separate profile has been drawn up for each of the school-leavers. This has been done descriptively in order to focus on certain common factors which will be closely analysed in later chapters.

##### 3.2 SEVEN INDIVIDUAL CASES

While the seven individual cases presented here are not intended to represent average students, they nevertheless highlight processes which help to throw some light onto the factors leading to occupational choice. The selected cases include both males and females from the practical and ordinary grades in both schools. The examples also include those who obtained employment before completing standard nine, and those who got jobs after matriculating. These cases illustrate the transition from school to lower-working-class jobs, apprenticeships, junior clerical work, and domesticity.

The differences between these various life-styles illustrate some of the processes behind these patterns. The case histories presented in this chapter were chosen because they indicate how particular types

of social backgrounds and educational experience influence the job-seeking behaviour of certain school-leavers.

#### A. LOGAN

Logan who was from a lower-working-class family left school at the beginning of standard nine. His father was a labourer with the South African Railways, and his mother was a housewife. Logan is the second of four children, and his younger brother and sisters received state disability grants. His father had a standard-five education and his mother could not read or write. He found it difficult to discuss matters about school with his parents because his father **"is not interested"** and his mother **"does not understand."**

While still at school, Logan left his parents' home and lived with his married sister, because his father frequently quarrelled with his mother. After living with his sister for only three months, Logan moved in with friends. During the period of this study he lived with three different families and **"experienced much difficulty in finding accommodation."**

After school hours Logan used to work as a part-time labourer for a builder, and as a delivery boy at a video-hiring outlet. He was also a member of a Hindi musical band, playing at weddings and concerts at weekends. Since he was a regular cinema patron, Logan enjoyed impersonating Hindi film stars and pop singers.

He left school at the beginning of standard nine, when he heard that there was a clerical job available at a local brick factory. However, he was unsuccessful since one of the requirements for this job was some paper qualifications and necessary experience in the use of computers. While at school, Logan indicated that he wanted to become a bookkeeper, since he liked accountancy as a school subject. He wished to take a course in this field at the technikon, but did not have enough money to do so.

His teachers saw him as an **"average"** and **"weak"** student who often **"truants"**. He just managed to pass standard eight. According to the school counsellor:

**"Logan has an IQ in the 80s with a higher verbal score. He wants to go to technikon, but this institution offers nothing for practical grade students. His IQ seems to correlate with his father's occupation. I've met his father who is of very low-level thinking."**

Soon after leaving school, Logan was employed as a counterhand in the video shop where he previously worked during weekends. This is a small shop with three assistants. The job was concerned with the hiring of video cassettes and machines. Logan was familiar with the titles of Hindi films, and found this aspect of the job interesting. He learnt the job within a few days, mainly by observing others at work. He had to record transactions, issue receipts and so on.

His employer, however, found him to be "irresponsible", as well as having difficulty in communicating with customers. According to him:

"Logan uses the telephone freely to speak to his girl friends and he even plays music for them on the phone. He pushes up the account unnecessarily. No one else will employ him. Quite often things are not in order. He finds it difficult to cope with the job. He is too easy going and not serious at all. After a party he does not turn up to work. He is most unreliable."

Logan, however found the job to be interesting because of the different types of people that he met. He said that "some customers joke, some guys are rough, and you have to get along with them." According to him the wage of thirty-five rands a week was adequate. However, he regarded the job as a temporary one because as soon as he had made enough money, he intended to go to technikon to study computer programming.

During the three years that he worked here, Logan was dismissed and re-employed by this firm on more than one occasion, but was finally fired because he was "accused of stealing cash."

It was not long before he got a second job. His new employer was a customer of the video outlet where he had worked. When Logan was unemployed, this person offered him a job. He earned twenty-five rands a week for washing cups, running errands, cleaning the floor and so on. This is a small firm with two registered employees.

Logan's second employer was also unimpressed with him. He felt that:

"Logan speaks a lot of lies and is like a mentally retarded boy. He is very slow. You must imagine that you are talking to a standard-five pupil. Everytime I gave him something to do, he did it wrong. I asked him to polish something and he broke it. He always lands himself in trouble."



During this spell of casual employment, Logan's father tried to find him a job with the railways, but was unsuccessful. Being unaware of the requirements for admission to technikon, Logan was still anxious to enrol there. He was not sure whether to study bookkeeping or to train as a parking meter repairer, a job which he heard of from a friend.

## B. ASHA

Asha was also from a low-working-class family. Her father was a handyman to an electrician, a job which he had had for thirty-four years. Both her parents had no schooling, while her brother who was employed as a messenger for a lawyer obtained a practical grade matriculation pass. Her mother who was previously a factory machinist became a housewife. The family lived in a small semi-detached council house in Bombay Heights, consisting of one bedroom, a kitchen and a sitting room. Most other houses in this vicinity are of a similar design, and many families live in over-crowded conditions.

When Asha decided to leave school at the beginning of standard nine, practical grade, her mother was unhappy since she wanted her to complete her matriculation and become a nurse. Her father also wanted her to remain at school so that she could "get a nice job". However, both parents were unaware of Asha's performance in school, and commented vaguely that she was "doing nicely". In fact, she performed well below the average for the class.

Her boyfriend was a student teacher who frequently visited her at home. Her mother disapproved of this relationship and this led to frequent quarrels between Asha and her mother. The relationship between Asha and her parents deteriorated to such an extent that she left home to live with one of her neighbours. This also led to her leaving school at the beginning of standard nine.

The teachers at Ridgemount Secondary commented on Asha's poor performance and her frequent absence. According to the counsellor:

**"Her performance has been steadily dropping. She has an IQ of 106. Her attendance is very irregular. She is withdrawn, and hardly responds in class."**

When Asha suggested to the counsellor that she wished to become

a nurse, he informed her that this career was not open to practical grade students. Instead, he advised her to become a nursing assistant. If she did not like this job, then she could enrol at one of the commercial colleges for a course in typing. The counsellor remarked: **"It is difficult to counsel practical grade students. Very few careers are open to them."**

Asha just managed to pass into standard nine, but left school early in the year because she was angry with her mother who complained to the welfare authorities about her troubled relationship with her parents. She was also annoyed that her mother had complained to the school principal. Asha soon left Bombay Heights to live near Pretoria so that she could be with her boyfriend who was studying at a teacher education institution. After living there for about six months, she returned to Durban since she could not find employment.

On her return, Asha was lucky to get a few casual jobs, but was unemployed for much of the time. One of her first jobs was that of a machinist at a clothing factory for two months. She earned about twenty-five rands a week but found the job very boring and soon left work. She preferred **"clerical work or something like that."**

After five months, she found another job: this time as a sales assistant at an outfitting shop. However, after two months she was dismissed because she was unable to work overtime. Asha remained unemployed till April 1984 when she got a job as a part-time, door-to-door saleswoman with a small cosmetic firm. She applied for this job after reading a newspaper advertisement. She was not happy with this job and was attempting to find some kind of clerical work. She felt that selling cosmetics in this way was **"not very good because it works by commission."** She said:

**"You don't make much. I will do this job till I get anything clerical; or anything for the moment, just to keep me going. I'm finding it very difficult at the moment. My aunt is giving me clothing and things like that. By October I should be married. My future husband does not want me to work."**



Her reasons for wanting a clerical job were:

"I like being independent, to feel wanted. If you are doing that kind of job, something low, you feel as if you are just an outcast. Like, for instance selling cosmetics from door to door, you are just another person walking the street. If you do a clerical job you know you are going to get a promotion or something like that."

Asha could not see any relationship between schooling and her experiences of work. She said that her casual jobs in the clothing firms and her work as a sales assistant dealt with things like "just opening and pressing of lace and dresses. For the education I've got, I don't think that these jobs are worth it."

During her spells of unemployment, she applied unsuccessfully for various jobs. At two hospitals where she enquired about nursing she was told that this job was only for matriculated girls with ordinary grade certificates. Even for other jobs such as receptionists and clerks, employers always wanted matriculation with subjects such as typing, accountancy and mathematics. In addition, employers usually wanted girls who had some previous experience. Since Asha had no previous experience and did not do typing at school, she felt that she was at a tremendous disadvantage. Besides qualifications and experience, employers also "look for handwriting, honesty and so on. When certain teachers spoke to us about these qualities, I said, 'that's all trash!' But when I really went to look for a job, I thought how important it was." Guidance lessons were considered to be useful because:

"they taught us how to approach employers and things like that. It helped me a lot on how to speak, to care about your appearance and your manners. That's what employers look for in you, your ability, how you can work, and how you can get on with people."

Despite these difficulties, Asha was determined to go on looking for a suitable job. She was prepared to take on anything in the meantime so as to pay for her boarding, and to make ends meet. She was not happy about depending on others helping her out. After marriage, she intended to study for her matriculation on a part-time basis. She felt that her husband would encourage her to do so.

C. PRAKASH

Prakash who lived in Delhi Vale was from a lower-middle-class family. He had a younger brother and sister, and his father was a motor car salesman, while his mother was a housewife. Though his father had only a standard-six education, he had updated himself by "attending many seminars on motor car sales" and through a "lot of reading". He was so engrossed in his work as a salesman that there was not much time to check Prakash's schoolwork. However, he had a vague idea that Prakash was doing well, and said that "being in the practical grade, you can't expect much. There's nothing I can do. In my case, if I lost a sale in the car game, I say 'dead and gone, finished.'" Generally, Prakash's father was in favour of education and was very much against school boycotts. He felt that it was "only through getting enough education we can succeed in life."

Prakash's father was keen that his son should become a radio and television technician. He had a brother who owned a radio and television "repairshop", who was willing to employ Prakash. Thereafter, his father was prepared to help him to eventually set up his own business. However, when Prakash left school at the end of standard eight, practical grade, his father was quite happy to arrange a job for him as an apprentice motor mechanic in the firm for which he worked. The manager encouraged him to get Prakash into this firm since several members of this family were already employed there.

Prakash was regarded by most of his teachers as being an "above average" student. He was also considered to be well spoken, well mannered, and responsible. While at school, Prakash wanted to repeat standard eight in the ordinary grade so that he could pass standard ten in this grade and then study at a technikon to become a draughtsman or a radio and television technician. By aiming for these careers, Prakash felt that he would have "a trade in his hands."

The counsellor suggested to him that he should try to pass his matriculation, since higher qualifications would lead to better pay in these fields. He also persuaded Prakash to accept the fact that he was a "practically" rather than "academically orientated" person, that he was better at "using his hands" than at "reading a novel." He pointed to Prakash's better perfor-

mance in subjects like industrial arts to persuade him to attend a technical high school because **"the course there suits a practical person, whereas, here at Orchard Lane it's more book knowledge."** The counsellor also referred to Prakash's higher non-verbal IQ to show that **"he is more on the practical side."**

Though he liked school and especially industrial arts, as soon as he had completed standard eight Prakash gave up the idea of going to technikon. He wanted to leave school to **"take up an apprenticeship."** When he realised that his performance was declining he made up his mind to leave, much against his father's wishes. Prakash said, **"I just wanted my practical grade to pick up a trade,"** and intended to further his studies on a part-time basis while still at work.

Within two weeks of leaving school, he applied for a job in the company for which his father worked, and was soon employed as an apprentice motor mechanic. All he needed for this job was a standard-eight certificate, and this meant starting work two years earlier than anticipated. Prakash considered this to be an advantage in terms of additional work experience. Though he no longer had any desires of becoming a radio and television technician, he felt that the job of a motor mechanic also fell into the same **"practical"** category which the school counsellor advised him about. Being a motor mechanic also meant **"having a trade"** in his hands.

Soon after starting work, Prakash was sent on an **"induction course"** to get orientated towards workshop practice. He was then placed under the supervision of a journeyman. During the three-year apprenticeship period, he was sent on in-service courses to upgrade his qualifications to NTC I and II. These were **"very valuable courses."** He felt **"without these you don't know how the parts of a car really work."** Prakash liked this job very much although the wage of seventy-nine rands a week was **"not very much."**

His father also saw the job in a similar light. He wanted Prakash to get his **"A Grade"** card. Prakash did not mind working with grease, oils and so on when repairing cars.

However, he felt that there were not many promotion opportunities. He knew of mechanics who worked for about ten to twelve years

in this company without being promoted. But he felt that "times are changing and maybe Indians will get a better chance." He said: "The White man is giving us some say, but if an Indian and a White apply for a post, the White still stands a better chance of getting it. He has the right contacts whereas we have to prove ourselves."

Prakash did not see much connection between this job and the things he learnt at school. He was happy that he left school in standard eight and "started a trade." He went on to say:

"I know I'm two years in advance now. I know more in my trade now, than if I carried on studying in school. My father wasn't very happy that I should leave school. He wanted me to complete my matric and take up a good job. But now he feels that I have adapted myself well to this job, and I know what I'm in for."

At work, the manager found Prakash to be a "reasonably disciplined youngster who is fairly quiet"; and also diligent in his work. The manager placed a lot of emphasis on discipline since he felt that a disciplined worker can adapt himself to almost anything that is required. He also felt that once Prakash was a qualified mechanic, there would be ample opportunities for promotion.

When comparing school with work, Prakash felt that "school is more like a holiday. At work you have to push out so many hours a day to make so much profit, and to cover up for lost time. At school you don't have to worry about that."

Eventually, he would like to be a salesman like his father. "There's more money in that." If that does not work out, he hoped that by obtaining additional trade qualifications through part-time study he would get a job as an instructor in motor mechanics at the technikon. He said:

"They pay quite well, and I don't mind studying. There's no grease work, and you work for about thirty weeks a year, and you get long holidays. Working conditions are better."

Failing this, he might even open his own business. He felt that there was "plenty of money" in that.



D. SARAS

Saras's family lived in the garage of a brick cottage in the Lyndale area. This garage was partitioned into a single bedroom and a small kitchen. Her parents and five sisters lived in rather over-crowded conditions. Her father who was a gardener at a municipal nursery was educated up to standard six. He previously worked as a caddie, a fishmonger's assistant, and as a factory hand. Her mother who had a standard-two education was a housewife. One of Saras's sisters had been to high school, and her younger sister was in standard eight.

The family lived very near Orchard Lane Secondary and Saras's father found this convenient for attending many of the parents' meetings. He therefore had some idea of her progress in school. He felt that education is essential in today's world. Saras's mother also believed in the value of education, especially for girls.

Her father wanted her to further her studies, and was supportive of her ambition to **"take up computer programming."** He spoke to the teachers about a career in this field and they approved of it. However, Saras also wished to join the police force. Once again, her father was not against this, but her mother felt that such a job was dangerous for a girl.

Saras's school performance was good. She obtained over sixty per cent in most examinations, and excelled at typing, obtaining an A in matriculation. Her teachers regarded her as **"very consistent", "very neat", "always ever obliging", "a very bright pupil", "who should enter university."** One of them remarked:

**"She wants to become a policewoman. I was disappointed. I felt that she is worth, academically more than what she thinks of herself. She would make a very good teacher. She could manage university or training college work quite well."**

When she was in standard eight Saras wished to train as a nurse after she matriculated. But she soon abandoned this idea and thought of becoming a secretary. She felt that typing and accountancy would be of great assistance in this job. By the time she had reached standard ten, she had read and heard a great deal about computers and wished to study computer programming at the technikon. She was attracted to this because **"the world is becoming more geared towards computers."**

Saras also felt that she had chosen correctly by taking the G 57 course which included subjects like typing, mathematics and accountancy. These subjects were considered to be relevant to computer programming. However, she felt that if the G 57 course included subjects like business economics and business methods there would be greater relevance.

"I think that going into the business field is more important today. It is important to understand the work that's involved. These subjects will give you a better understanding of the firm, and how things operate."

The counsellor's opinion was that Saras was definitely **"university material"** although she had no intention of going to university. He used the results of the Thurstone Interest Test which he administered to her to point out that she was science and commerce orientated. He also tried to persuade Saras to go to university to take up a career in science or commerce, but she was not interested. Instead, she indicated that she would like to do a secretarial course at the technikon, to which the counsellor responded:

"You must train to be the kind of secretary who is very, very highly educated and reaches very high levels. You must be a secretary who has a degree. You shouldn't be the type of secretary who just knows how to do some typing, filing, writing of letters and so on. Do a university degree, and then do a secretarial course, and become a very highly demanded secretary."

He felt that she was a **"very pleasant girl who speaks well, has a very charming personality, and will make an outstanding secretary."** When Saras suggested that she also thought of doing computer programming, he advised her that this was a worthwhile career to pursue since there were many openings for Indians. However, he encouraged her to take a diploma rather than a certificate in computer studies. He said that there were better chances of getting a job with a diploma.

Within a month of matriculating, Saras replied to a newspaper advertisement and got a job as a typist in a clothing factory. Though employed as a typist, she also operated the telex machine, did some filing, stocktaking and ordering of materials. These additional jobs were given to her when there was not much typing to do. Her supervisor felt that she was quite a capable person who always finished her work on time, and was keen to

get on with her job. She was also regular in her work and was willing to do anything asked of her. The manager, however, felt that if she could demonstrate that she was **"responsible and conscientious,"** she could become the director's personal secretary.

At first, Saras found the job interesting, especially operating the telex. Her workmates were very helpful, especially when she had problems. She found the manager and supervisor to be particularly helpful. However, as time went on she found that the routine nature of the job made it very uninteresting. She also found that the salary of two hundred and twenty-five rands per month was **"absolutely too little"**, and could not see herself lasting in this job for more than six months.

**"I see no future in this job. There's no such thing as a bettering of position. There's a girl here, who has been working for the past three years, and has not been promoted. In the beginning, telex was interesting, but things have become routine now."**

Except for typing, Saras did not see much relevance between what she learnt in school and this job. Even the lessons on careers were not of much use. She said:

**"When you really get to the job it's something different. We were just given a broad idea that secretaries sit at one desk and do just one person's work. But things are really different here."**

Once she had earned enough money, Saras intended leaving this job to enrol at the police training college. If that did not work out, she would enrol at the technikon to study computer programming.

#### **E. KESVAL**

Kesval's parents were divorced and he was living with his mother, elder sister, and two younger brothers in an outbuilding of a three-bedroomed cottage in Bombay Heights. The living conditions were over-crowded, and the family later moved to a small flat in the same area. His father was employed as a general handyman, while his mother used to work as a factory machinist. Then she became a housewife. Both parents passed standard six. His sister obtained matriculation and was employed as a school secretary, but hoped to give this up and train as a teacher.

Kesval's uncle was a teacher at Ridgemount Secondary and kept a close watch on his progress at school. It was from this uncle that his mother learnt of his progress in school. She was aware that Kesval was good in mathematics since her brother taught this subject. His mother wanted him to seek work once he had completed standard ten. Though she knew that he was keen to take a course in computer studies, she felt that this might not be possible because of the financial position of the family.

Kesval chose the S 7 course mainly on the advice of his uncle. He also felt that this would be a useful course whether he wished to study computer science or if he were to embark on a career as a radio and television technician. He spoke of these careers during counselling sessions at school. Though he obtained a Matriculation Exemption pass with an A in mathematics, he felt that his home circumstances did not allow him to do as well as he would have liked to. He said, "I have a lot of problems at home. My father is an alcoholic, and every day when I go home I find him drunk. He swears...".

Most of Kesval's teachers saw him as "an average pupil," "a very reserved boy" who might probably become a teacher, enter banking, or might study at the technikon. The school counsellor saw him as one with "mechanical abilities". This was especially evident when he approved of Kesval's intentions to become a computer programmer, or a radio and television technician. He used the results of the Rothwell Miller Interest Test which he administered to Kesval to explain that:

"These jobs have to do specifically with your hands. This reveals that the mechanical field is the field for you. It looks as if you are heading in the right direction."

He also used the results of an IQ test to convince Kesval that these jobs were within his reach.

Soon after he matriculated, Kesval realised that his mother was not in a position to finance his intended full-time studies in computer programming. His sister left work, and his father was no longer compelled to maintain him. This meant that he had to look for work. His uncle knew the departmental supervisor at a large textile company and asked him about a job for Kesval. He was offered a job as a filing clerk, but was not keen to accept this. However, his uncle persuaded him to do so, and to further his studies on a part-time basis.



This job involved filing invoices, debit and credit notes, and bank deposit slips. The supervisor was influenced by Kesval's family circumstances when he offered him this job. He said:

"He comes from a poor family with financial problems. This is one of the factors which influences me when I employ people. For example, where there is no breadwinner. I knew of Kesval's circumstances from my son who teaches in the same school as his uncle."

The supervisor regarded Kesval as "an average worker who, though playful at times doesn't neglect his duties."

Kesval, however, was not happy with this job. He felt that the salary of two hundred and fifty rands per month was too little and that working conditions were bad.

Kesval regarded this as a temporary job, hoping to get a better job with a salary of about seven hundred rands per month. He looked through newspaper advertisements and spoke to friends and relatives to help him in the search for work. He applied, unsuccessfully for jobs such as assistant librarian, trainee accountant, and process technician. Kesval also believed that by doing part-time studies he could improve his chances of getting a suitable job. Besides studying computer programming, he also had plans to study for a B.Com degree.

#### F. PAT

Pat's father who had a standard-six education was once a carpenter, but was later self-employed as a vegetable hawker. His mother who left school in standard three was a housewife. Pat had two older brothers. One worked as an assistant printer, and the other was a welder. The family lived in a neatly renovated sub-economic council house in Bombay Heights. Pat's father supplemented the family income by running a shebeen at home, and had allowed Pat to "earn" his pocket money by helping him to run a small gambling school. He said that this money was enough for Pat to buy his clothing. His brothers left school in standards seven and eight respectively. Pat was the first child in the family to complete standard ten. This he did in the practical grade at Ridgemount Secondary.

His father did not know much about Pat's school performance, except that "he is doing alright." He had no knowledge about Pat's weak or strong subjects, or the differences between prac-

tical and ordinary grade courses. All that he could advise Pat was "study a little harder to improve yourself." He also had no definite plans for his son's future career. He said, "I have nothing in mind. He must choose for himself."

Pat's performance in school usually ranged between 45 to 50 per cent in the examinations. He liked metalwork and science which he regarded as valuable for a "craftsmen's job." Most of his teachers were unimpressed with him, seeing him as "weak", "casual in his attitude to work", "playful", and "without interest in schoolwork." One of them commented that "Pat will most likely finish off in one of the workshops. He has a tendency of working with wood and metalwork." Another said, "I think he is interested in the technical field, definitely not at a desk; possibly a mechanic, or a technician or something."

While still at school, Pat expressed the wish to become a welder. Though his elder brother who was a welder advised him against this because of the risk of damage to the eyes, Pat felt that one could make extra money in this job through additional part-time work. His other preference was to become a telephone technician, a job which he learnt a great deal about from one of his cousins who worked for the Post Office. He also expressed a preference for clerical work since he felt that business methods and business economics which he studied at school would help him in this job. He looked forward to some kind of permanent job in which the promotion prospects would be good. He felt that he should be able to get such a job through his father's contacts. Pat felt that having contact was more important than qualifications and competing for jobs on the open market.

The school counsellor advised him that his chances of getting a job as a welder would be better if he obtained a standard-ten certificate. When Pat told him that he also wished to be a telephone technician, the counsellor felt that his IQ of 95 pointed to this type of job. He remarked:

**"From what I see of his IQ, I think this job shouldn't be beyond him. It is within his capabilities to do that sort of thing."**

After leaving school, Pat was unemployed for about six months and then got a job as a stores clerk in a fabric firm. His job involved the checking and recording of stock. The recording was done on cards. He also had to transfer computer codes onto

sheets of paper. Pat left this job after two weeks. He was unhappy with the wages, the strict supervision, and found it difficult to get transport to and from work. He said:

**"They were pushing me around. There were transport problems, and the pay was sixty rands a week."**

Pat also felt that the job was not challenging, and that anyone with at least standard-six education could have managed it easily. It was not befitting for someone with a matriculation certificate to do such a job. During his long spells of unemployment Pat responded to many newspaper advertisements for jobs, but was unsuccessful. He found that most jobs were for **"experienced persons."** This insistence on **"experience"** was most frustrating to him. He said:

**"We are school-leavers, having just finished our matric. I don't know where the hell we are going to get the experience from. That's unfair!"**

In his applications for jobs, he always mentioned that he is a youth, aged eighteen years, an Indian male. When asked why he did this, Pat replied:

**"Some jobs are for Whites only. They wouldn't want to take you on. You have to give them a clear idea of what race group you belong to. I mention I am a male because Pat is also a girl's name."**

Having experienced much hardship during unemployment, Pat was no longer determined to become a technician, clerk or computer programmer - some of the jobs he mentioned while at school. He was prepared to take on any job, merely to gain some experience. He felt that this would be beneficial when looking for something more permanent and secure.

Since he found it difficult to get jobs through applications, he felt that using contacts would be more effective. Pat found that guidance lessons in school did not deal with any of the real problems of youth unemployment. He felt that strategies for coping could have been discussed. One of his main problems was that of finance. He wanted to take a short course in welding, but could not afford it. Another plan that he wished to adopt was to form a syndicate and to start a small, panel-beating business in the backyard of one of his friend's homes. But once again, the problem was finance.

He felt that one of the main problems facing youngsters searching for work was the lack of trade and educational qualifications.

For example, he found that his classmates in the practical grade who left school before matriculating "went on to get trade certificates, and this increased their chances of getting jobs." As far as his own case was concerned, he said:

"I had the opportunity to take up an apprenticeship at the end of standard eight. If I was witty enough to leave school at that stage, I should have got a good job and I should have been earning a good salary today. There are many trades for which a standard-ten certificate is not required."

Pat also felt strongly that very few good jobs were available to practical grade students. He therefore recognised the importance of the ordinary grade matriculation certificate for better jobs.

#### G. SAVY

Savy belonged to the lower working class and lived in a joint family which consisted of her mother, father, brothers, her married sister's family and three adopted children of relatives. They had lived in a small two-bedroomed cottage provided by a brick company for which her father worked for more than thirty years. Later the family moved into a council flat for pensioners in Northflats, a recently established, large Indian township in North Durban.

Savy's mother who had not been to school was a housewife, and her father had a standard-five education. His first job was that of a labourer in the canefield. Later he "wanted to learn a trade," and became a maintenance handyman for a large brick company. He had six sons and three daughters, most of whom were married and were living on their own. The boys had at least a standard-nine education, while the girls left school in standard six and were soon married.

Savy was in the practical grade at Orchard Lane Secondary. Her father had no knowledge of her performance in school or about the difference between the practical and ordinary grades.

Although Savy told him that since she loved caring for the pets at home and wished to become a nursing assistant to a veterinary surgeon, he wanted her to become a dressmaker. He bought her a sewing machine to practise at home. However, if she was determined to be a nursing assistant he would not stand in her way.



Savy usually obtained between 40 and 50 per cent in her school examinations. The things she liked best about school were the sporting activities, and the opportunity to be with her friends. She liked needlework and housecraft, but was disappointed that typing was not offered to practical grade students. She believed that schooling was necessary since it taught one manners, etiquette, and how to communicate. However, Savy expressed her strong disapproval of the school's policy of providing more opportunities for ordinary grade students.

Savy told the school counsellor that she wanted to be an assistant nurse to a veterinary surgeon. If she was unsuccessful she would like to do a secretarial course, and try to get a job as a secretary and switchboard operator. She learnt that some of her friends who recently left school got such jobs.

Many of her teachers saw her as **"very average", "quiet", "well behaved",** and **"not too bright."** Some of them predicted that she would become a shop assistant, a factory machinist, or a housewife after she left school. According to the counsellor:

**"Savy has got a very nice personality, and she comes across as a sympathetic person. She has a real interest in pets. I don't see why she shouldn't do well in it. Since she loves animals so much, this job is going to fit in well."**

The counsellor used the results of the Thurstone Interest Test which he conducted with Savy to persuade her that she was better at working with her hands than at intellectual activities. He tried to justify this by saying:

**"She has a very low IQ. She has a high non-verbal IQ. She excels more at practical skills, at things that require very little verbal skills."**

Soon after matriculating, Savy found great difficulty in getting a job. She was unsuccessful in getting a job as a nurse-aid. Some of the other jobs that she applied for included the following: security woman in a hospital, secretary in a metal manufacturing company, machinist in a dressmaking firm, counterhand at a cosmetic shop, and cashier in a supermarket.

Savy felt that one of the difficulties in getting a job had to do with the fact that she was put into the practical grade at school. She said:

**"It's very hard to get a job. They want more qualifications now. About two to three years**

of experience is also required. We are not experienced, so how are we going to get these jobs?"

She felt that one of the disadvantages of being in the practical grade at Orchard Lane was that typing was not offered. This immediately placed her at a disadvantage when she applied for secretarial jobs. She also felt that when employers realised that she had a practical grade matriculation they tended to underestimate her.

Savy felt that race was another factor which affected her chances of getting a job. She said that many newspaper advertisements specifically mentioned that certain jobs were for Whites only.

**"I always ask my father why this is so. Maybe the Whites have better qualifications than us, but everyone is looking for jobs, not only Whites."**

Being a girl also posed some problems. For example, when she went to a certain clothing factory, she was told that the job of a machine repairer was reserved for males only. Savy felt that this was unfair since her friends and herself had repaired sewing machines at school.

Members of her family were unemployed for long spells, and this was characteristic of the family background. Her brother was unemployed for about one and half years. Her brother-in-law was unemployed for about eight months. However, Savy was quite determined to find a job **"rather than sitting at home, doing nothing."** She hoped to take a short course in typing so that she could get an office job. To do this, she would have to be financed by her brother who expected to start work soon. In the meantime, Savy intended to repair her sewing machine and to make children's clothes at home. She could sell these to get some income.

It was during this period of struggle to find work that Savy met Gona whom she decided to marry. He helped his parents to run their mobile business in the Northflats area. Savy was also willing to assist the family with their business. She believed that a wife should help to supplement the husband's income. However, if he earned well the wife could stay at home.

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

When these case studies are viewed in the context of the data presented in the forthcoming chapters, it should be evident how some of the patterns highlighted here were worked out in practice. Some of the important aspects are those concerning differences in life-styles of the students, differences in their experience of schooling, gender differences, the influence of teachers and parents on the choices made by students, and the use of informal networks in the labour market in trying to obtain jobs. These case studies also illustrate how the students' choices were affected by events and circumstances beyond their control, as well as by their own decisions and actions.

In the cases of Logan, Asha and Savy we get some idea of how those who belonged to the lower working class decided to leave school to look for work. Asha and Savy also indicate how their decisions to enter into marriage affected their future position in the labour market. When seen in the light of the discussion of the literature on the transition from school in Part One of this study, these case studies illustrate some of the issues on class, race, gender and the production and reproduction of culture.

The **"submerged middle-class"** value for upward mobility seemed to be a strong characteristic of the Indian community, even among the working classes. There were examples of working-class fathers such as those of Pat and Savy who displayed some mobility themselves by becoming tradesmen, hawkers and so on.

These case studies also illustrate the experiences of schooling, particularly how school counsellors and teachers perceive students in terms of their future careers. There was sufficient evidence to illustrate how school counsellors processed their students by making a distinction between the **"mental"** and the **"manual"**. This distinction was clearly seen in the review of Willis's study in Part One. We also notice that the practical grade students, in particular were well aware of the limited opportunities that the school offered them. Even their teachers acknowledged that not much could be done for them. These students also did not see much relevance of schoolwork to their experience of work. They were, however, conscious of the need for **"good**

**qualifications"** to get secure jobs, something that was impressed upon them by their teachers.

Finally, there is evidence in the accounts of Saras, Kesval and Pat to support the material presented in Chapter Six about the unchallenging nature of work for some of these young people. They did not perceive employment as an avenue to self fulfilment. It was seen as something temporary, a stepping stone to something more permanent and secure. Thus, their initial experience of work produced several contradictions, especially when one considers their aspirations while they were at school. Work was experienced as something which was compulsory, but not enjoyable. Against this, their experience of school, and in particular the advice offered by teachers and counsellors, appeared to be in direct contradiction to the liberal ideology of self realisation and opportunity for upward mobility. These tensions were seen in their desire to change jobs as quickly as possible, and the boring nature of work as illustrated in the cases of Kesval and Saras.

Finally, the cases of Savy, Pat and Asha illustrate the experiences of unemployment, the belief in the use of contacts to get jobs, the problems of inexperience and lack of adequate qualifications in getting **"good"** jobs. Asha and Savy, in particular, illustrate the position of young female school-leavers, the effects of gender structuring on job opportunities, and the route to marriage.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis in this chapter is primarily concerned with the cultural settings of the families of the school-leavers of different social classes. An analysis of various aspects of family culture provides a background for understanding why lower-working-class parents, for example, have sets of expectations about their children's educational and career prospects that are different from those of the upper working class and the middle class. It also offers an account of how these families function as agents of cultural transmission, cultural production and reproduction.

#### 4.2 THE HOME VISITS

##### 4.2.1 Gaining Access

Since it was considered impracticable to visit the homes of all the students for lengthy periods to capture the cultural climate through participant observation, the best that could be achieved was a number of largely formal visits. Every student was visited at least once, and each home visit lasted for approximately one hour. Some homes were visited on more than one occasion. This was done on a selective basis. Two students were visited on more than four occasions. Table 4.1 indicates the details concerning these visits.

TABLE 4.1  
DETAILS OF HOME VISITS

CATEGORY	ORCHARD LANE		RIDGEMOUNT	
	NO. OF STUDENTS	NO. OF VISITS	NO. OF STUDENTS	NO. OF VISITS
Practical grade school-leavers	7	18	7	19
Ordinary grade school-leavers	7	20	2	5
Tertiary education group	5	7	7	10
TOTAL	19	45	16	34

There was no rigid time schedule for the visits, except that in the case of the early school-leavers they were visited soon

after they had left school. In the case of others, visits took place when the students were in their last year at school. This was considered to be the opportune time because it was the period during which the students and their parents were most likely to be deciding on career and tertiary educational routes. Additional home visits were made for those who were employed and those who were looking for work. A total of seventy-nine home visits were made for the entire sample. Of these, sixty-two were made to the homes of school-leavers.

While the students were at school, explanatory letters were sent to the parents, setting out the details and purpose of this study, and the reasons for the home visit. The fact that I had met some of the parents previously at meetings organised by the school, made access to the homes much easier. I had the opportunity to explain why their children were selected to participate in this study. There were no refusals for requests to visit the home, and the reception was generally very good. However the homes of two students could not be visited, and the reasons for this are given in section 4.2.4.

In a few cases, it was difficult to keep track of students who had left school early and who moved frequently from one home to another. Logan from the practical grade at Orchard Lane and Asha from the practical grade at Ridgemount,<sup>1</sup> for example, experienced domestic problems and lived with about three or four different families in and out of their neighbourhoods.

#### 4.2.2 Sources of Data

Data were collected mainly through interviews and discussions with the parents of the school-leavers, and the tertiary education group. There were also opportunities to observe activities in the homes, social relationships and material circumstances of the home, and the immediate neighbourhood. These were recorded in the form of field notes.

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1. In each of the Chapters Four to Eight, and in the Appendices, where the name of a particular student is mentioned, the name of the school and the grade to which he or she belongs have also been mentioned. However, this was done only on the first occasion when reference was made to any particular student. Thereafter, these details were omitted.

In most cases, discussions were conducted with one of the two parents, more often the father. Table 4.2 gives an indication of the amounts of data collected via these sources.

TABLE 4.2

## SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF DATA COLLECTED

SOURCE	SCHOOL-LEAVERS	TERTIARY EDUC. GROUP
	NO: 23 APPROX. TIME IN MINS	NO: 12 APPROX. TIME IN MINS
1. Tape recordings of inter-views and discussions	2 820	780
2. Observations of activities etc. recorded in field notes	600	180
TOTAL	3 420	960

TOTAL TIME = 4380 MINUTES

TIME IN HOURS = 73

4.2.3 Observations, Discussions and Interviews

The interviews and discussions held with parents and others were aimed at capturing the universe of meanings of these people, and to gain some insight into the strategies they employed to try to further their children's educational and career goals. In particular, I tried to find out about parents' awareness of their children's progress in school; their aspirations for their children; parents' educational and occupational backgrounds; their beliefs about education; and how children spend their time at home. In those instances where more than one home visit was made, the focus was narrowed to include such specific issues as the reasons for early school leaving, the role of family members in securing employment for school-leavers, and the parents' views on the jobs which their children entered.

Observations in the home focussed on the roles of males and females, domestic and other duties of the children, size of family, economic circumstances, part-time jobs in which parents and children were involved, and the students' pastimes. Other details included the physical description of the home and the immediate neighbourhood.

Such information was useful for gauging the general cultural and educational climate of the homes, and the influences which led the students to make certain job choices. In particular,

this should enable me to judge the kinds of advice given, and the models available to children in different family settings.

#### 4.2.4 Some Problems Encountered with Data Collection

There were some factors beyond my control, which may have affected the reliability of the data. One example of a case which presented difficulty in gathering data is that of Logan who kept putting me off visiting his home, or even the homes of friends or relatives with whom he lived. He did not want me to talk to people who were likely to give me an unfavourable impression of him.

Another student whose home it was difficult to visit was Kalavathee from the practical grade at Orchard Lane. Just as I was making arrangements to visit the home her father died. It was considered inappropriate to visit at that time. When I attempted to visit at a later stage, she had married and moved to another district. However, some important information about the home background of both these students was obtained from teachers at school, their friends, and from the students themselves during interviews and discussions at school.

There were also some homes where my discussions with the parents were frequently interrupted, and which made both the parents and myself very tense. Two cases are those of Pat and Shiela, both from the practical grade at Ridgemount. Pat's family ran a shebeen, and during my visit a drunken customer kept making irrelevant comments while I was questioning Pat's father. During the visit to Sheila's house, her elder brother was drunk and created a similar problem. In both these cases, subsequent visits had to be made. Each time I visited Pat's home I was met at the gate by some new person who demanded to know the reason for my visit. I was looked upon with suspicion, as one who had come to investigate the illegal sale of liquor.

Despite my assurances in the letters which I sent out, some parents were not sure that whatever they said to me or what I saw during these visits would be treated confidentially. One of the mothers, for example, who received a state welfare grant was afraid that I was working in conjunction with the welfare authorities and would communicate with them. There was also the case of a father who had a sneaking suspicion that this was a political survey which might be used to prop

up the apartheid system. Another father became afraid when his son began to complain to me about conditions at work. He was worried that this discussion which was tape-recorded would be made known to his son's employers. I had to assure him that this would not happen.

There were also cases of certain students who may have concealed certain vital information from me because they felt embarrassed during these visits. Sundrie from the practical grade at Ridgemount, for example, did not expect her father to be so critical of her behaviour during his discussion with me. I was accompanied on this visit by one of her teachers who knew the families in this area very well. He assisted in establishing contact. However, his presence might have affected what was communicated and what was concealed from me. Sundrie was very uncomfortable during this visit, and later said to me:

"I felt very bad about the whole thing when my father spoke to you. I felt very embarrassed since one of my teachers came with you, and if this teacher happens to speak about this in the staffroom... Lots of things are discussed there."

Asha was another who felt embarrassed, especially when I kept track of some of the homes she moved into, and was able to observe some of the adverse conditions in which she lived. She said:

"I enjoyed your visits, but there are times like this when you come so unexpectedly. I am untidy and ... When I was in my parents' home I didn't mind, but when I was in other people's houses I sort of felt embarrassed. Living in so many different homes, you feel embarrassed. But I enjoy speaking to someone, especially when that person is interested in you."

There were some parents who were anxious to know what sort of direct benefits would accrue to their children from this study. I got the impression that these parents expected that since their children participated willingly in this study they should get something in return, such as, for example, helping them to find jobs. One of the fathers approached me directly, saying that since I was an "educated person" with "many contacts" I should be in a position to find his son a job. The fact that I was unable to satisfy such expectations might have affected the way these parents responded to me when I visited their homes on subsequent occasions.



I also had to be careful to steer clear of certain roles that the students and parents were trying to force me into. For example, Juggie from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane who was **"hooked on drugs"** tried to elicit my sympathy while his father complained to me about his behaviour, asking me to **"take steps to put Juggie right."** The father saw me as an authority figure from the school, while the son looked to me as someone who would shield him from his parents. I had to be careful not to take sides, and by adopting a neutral role I am not sure to what extent I had disappointed both father and son.

Another example where I was forced to play a similar neutral role was in the case of a tertiary education student. This boy's father had a complaint against the principal, which he wanted me to take up with the education authorities. He felt bitter about the principal's refusal to re-schedule mathematics lessons which Muslim students missed during midday on Fridays, when they had to attend prayer sessions at the mosque. Quite clearly, I could not interfere with the running of the school, as this was one of the conditions under which I was allowed to conduct this study.

The fact that in both these cases I was unable to play the roles which these parents expected of me could have affected my relationship with them. This in turn might have distorted some of the information which they gave to me.

However, despite some of these obstacles, the collection of data was generally made easy mainly through the keen interest shown by many parents. Several parents questioned me closely about the purpose of the study, and many approved of it since they believed it would lead to closer contact between home and school. They were also pleased that **"someone from the school"** had taken the trouble to visit them. Some saw this as an opportunity to find out about their children's progress in school. I was quite prepared to answer such questions since I took along a record of each pupil's school profile whenever I made a visit. The parents of the tertiary education group sought information about the availability of bursaries and the provision of courses at university, college of education and technikon. They also enquired about private tuition in subjects like mathematics and physical science.

#### 4.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The analysis began with a reading of all the data that were contained in the interviews, discussions, and observations. This meant examining the details relating to family background in the profile of each student. Out of this a preliminary analysis of the content was undertaken. Eleven broad categories were identified, according to which the main areas of content could be arranged. These were topics which the parents spoke about when discussing aspects of their children's education and future careers. These categories are listed in tables 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6 (on pages 218 to 221).

The eleven categories were coded, and the profile of each student was carefully scrutinised to see which categories were contained in it. The next step involved noting the number of times each category was referred to in the case of each student. Overall, it meant tallying the frequencies or the number of occurrences with which each category appeared in the entire range of content that was analysed. This procedure for the analysis of content is discussed by Eckhardt and Ermann (1977:298-300), Sanders and Pinkey (1983:188-90), and Cohen and Manion (1986:62).

References to particular categories were indicated by the statements made by the parents and the students, and in some instances through observational notes. Every time a category was referred to it was noted as an occurrence or frequency. The frequencies were then tallied for each student in respect of each specific category of content that was analysed.

The frequencies for all the students and their parents who referred to each specific category were then tallied. When all eleven categories were analysed in this way, it was possible to indicate for each what percentage of the total content it constituted. The content was analysed in this way for the entire sample of school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group. This meant combining the sub-samples from both schools. The content was also analysed separately for each school. In the case of the school-leavers, the analysis of content was indicated for both grades combined, and then separately for each grade. The analysis was also done separately for boys and girls.

There were instances when the statements or references could be fitted into more than one category. For example, when the parents spoke about their **"desire for mobility,"** general references were also made to **"beliefs about education,"** and **"desire for qualifications."** In these instances, each reference was carefully examined and the specific statements about **"desire for mobility"** were recorded in that category, and if there were other general references to **"education"** and **"qualifications,"** those were recorded in their respective categories.

Table 4.3 presents the content analysed in respect of the eleven categories for the entire sample of school-leavers; table 4.4 contains the data for Orchard Lane and table 4.5 for Ridgemount. Table 4.6 refers to the analysis of content for the tertiary education group. This approach to the analysis of content may be regarded as a quantitative method for the analysis of qualitative data (Sanders and Pinkey, 1983:185; Cohen and Manion, 1986:61). The purpose of using this procedure in the present study was to indicate what amounts of data were analysed in each category and to show how the content was arranged for the entire sample.

The analysis in this and other chapters that follow is essentially an overview of the free responses given by several individuals, and of observations made in a variety of settings. It is largely an analysis of disparate - and therefore uncontrolled - data. Individual participants in the study were not required to comment on the many things mentioned by other participants. Though, as the study neared completion, there was a certain amount of progressive focussing in the questions that were put to certain groups within the sample, all the members of the sample were not required to answer a common set of structured questions. The participants were not obliged to speak about certain specific matters to the exclusion of others.

For these reasons the data collected could not be subjected to statistical tests. Had this been done, it would have meant comparing dissimilar responses. Nor were structured comparisons possible; because the students dropped out of the study at different stages as they left school and looked for employment. However, while it was difficult to impose any kind of overall structured control, this did not prevent me from reviewing each individual profile in depth, and formulating specific



questions for each student, and for particular subgroups within the sample. The details concerning these questions appear in this and in other chapters in which the analysis of data is discussed.

However, a crude tally of frequencies does not necessarily reveal what is perhaps most important about these different categories, that is how they were linked in the minds of the parents. For example, when they spoke about "occupations", "school progress," "financial difficulties," "mobility" and "qualifications," it was possible to see the relationships between these categories when considering how parents viewed their children's future careers. Such linkages also indicate how the parents constructed their realities under different social conditions. By using this kind of relational analysis, it was possible to examine the parents' influences on the construction of the students' career identities.

TABLE 4.3

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES FOR THE  
TOTAL SAMPLE OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE						ORDINARY GRADE						TOTAL					
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Description of houses	18	10.00	9	11	10.00	6	29	10.00	15	10	8.77	5	7	8.04	4	17	8.45	9
2. Educational levels	36	20.00	9	20	18.18	7	56	19.31	16	22	19.29	5	15	17.24	4	37	18.40	9
3. Family size	11	6.11	9	8	7.27	7	19	6.55	16	7	6.14	5	4	4.59	4	11	5.47	9
4. Occupations	26	14.44	9	22	20.00	7	48	16.55	16	15	13.15	5	11	12.64	4	26	12.93	9
5. Awareness of school progress	24	13.33	9	15	13.63	5	39	13.44	14	18	15.78	6	10	11.49	3	28	13.93	9
6. Beliefs about education	18	10.00	7	4	3.63	2	22	7.58	9	13	11.40	5	9	10.34	4	22	10.94	9
7. Financial difficulties	9	5.00	6	8	7.27	4	17	5.86	10	13	11.40	5	4	4.59	2	17	8.45	7
8. Aspirations for children	21	11.66	8	9	8.18	6	30	10.34	14	8	7.01	4	11	12.64	4	19	9.45	8
9. Desire for mobility	7	3.88	4	3	2.72	2	10	3.44	6	6	5.26	4	5	5.74	3	11	5.47	7
10. Desire for qualifications	7	3.88	6	1	0.90	1	8	2.75	7	2	1.75	3	5	5.74	3	7	3.48	6
11. Gender	3	1.66	2	9	8.18	5	12	4.13	7	0	0.0	0	6	6.89	4	6	2.98	4
	3	1.02	2	15	7.61	9	18	3.66	11									

TABLE 4.4

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES FOR  
SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT ORCHARD LANE

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE						ORDINARY GRADE						TOTAL					
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Description of houses	10	8.84	6	6	11.11	2	16	9.58	8	7	10.14	3	7	8.13	4	14	9.03	7
2. Educational levels	24	21.23	6	12	22.22	3	36	21.55	9	12	17.39	3	15	17.44	4	27	17.41	7
3. Family size	7	6.19	6	3	5.55	3	10	5.98	9	5	7.24	3	4	4.65	4	9	5.80	7
4. Occupations	17	15.04	6	11	20.37	3	28	16.76	9	8	11.59	3	11	12.79	4	19	12.25	7
5. Awareness of school progress	16	14.15	6	5	9.25	1	21	12.57	7	11	15.94	4	10	11.62	3	21	13.54	7
6. Beliefs about education	9	7.96	4	3	5.55	1	12	7.18	5	8	11.59	3	9	10.46	4	17	10.96	7
7. Financial difficulties	7	6.19	4	2	3.70	1	9	5.38	5	7	10.14	3	4	4.65	2	11	7.09	5
8. Aspirations for children	12	10.61	5	6	11.11	3	18	10.77	8	7	10.14	3	11	12.79	4	18	11.61	7
9. Desire for mobility	7	6.19	4	2	3.70	1	9	5.38	5	3	4.34	2	5	5.81	3	8	5.16	5
10. Desire for qualifications	4	3.53	3	0	0.0	0	4	2.39	3	1	1.44	1	4	4.65	3	5	3.22	4
11. Gender	0	0.0	0	4	7.40	2	4	2.39	2	0	0.0	0	6	6.97	4	6	3.87	4

TABLE 4.5

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT RIDGEMOUNT

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE			ORDINARY GRADE			TOTAL		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.
1. Description of houses	8 11.94 3	5 8.92 4	13 10.56 7	3 6.52 2	0 0.0 0	3 6.52 2	11 9.82 5	5 8.77 4	16 9.46 9
2. Educational levels	12 17.91 3	8 14.28 4	20 16.26 7	10 21.73 2	0 0.0 0	10 21.73 2	22 19.64 5	8 14.03 4	30 17.75 9
3. Family size	4 5.97 3	5 8.92 4	9 7.31 7	2 4.34 2	0 0.0 0	2 4.34 2	6 5.35 5	5 8.77 4	11 6.50 9
4. Occupations	9 13.43 3	11 19.64 4	20 16.26 7	7 15.21 2	0 0.0 0	7 15.21 2	16 14.28 5	11 19.29 4	27 15.97 9
5. Awareness of school progress	8 11.94 3	10 17.85 4	18 14.63 7	7 15.21 2	0 0.0 0	7 15.21 2	15 13.39 5	10 17.54 4	25 14.79 9
6. Beliefs about education	9 13.43 3	1 1.78 1	10 8.13 4	5 10.86 2	0 0.0 0	5 10.86 2	14 12.50 5	1 1.75 1	15 8.87 6
7. Financial difficulties	2 2.98 2	6 10.71 3	8 6.50 5	6 13.04 2	0 0.0 0	6 13.04 2	8 7.14 4	6 10.52 3	14 8.28 7
8. Aspirations for children	9 13.43 3	3 5.35 3	12 9.75 6	1 2.17 1	0 0.0 0	1 2.17 1	10 8.92 4	3 5.26 3	13 7.69 7
9. Desire for mobility	0 0.0 0	1 1.78 1	1 0.81 1	3 6.52 2	0 0.0 0	3 6.52 2	3 2.67 2	1 1.75 1	4 2.36 3
10. Desire for qualifications	3 4.47 3	1 1.78 1	4 3.25 4	2 4.34 2	0 0.0 0	2 4.34 2	4 3.57 5	2 3.50 1	6 3.55 6
11. Gender	3 4.47 2	5 8.92 3	8 6.50 5	0 0.0 0	0 0.0 0	0 0.0 0	3 2.67 2	5 8.77 3	8 4.73 5

TABLE 4.6

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE TERTIARY EDUCATION GROUP  
AT ORCHARD LANE AND RIDGEMOUNT

CONTENT CATEGORIES	ORCHARD LANE			RIDGEMOUNT			TOTAL		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.	f % No.
1. Description of houses	8 10.52 4	2 6.06 1	10 9.17 5	3 6.52 2	11 9.73 5	14 8.80 7	11 9.01 6	13 8.90 6	24 8.95 12
2. Educational levels	17 22.36 4	5 15.15 1	22 20.18 5	8 17.39 2	23 20.35 5	31 19.49 7	25 20.49 6	28 19.17 6	53 19.77 12
3. Family size	5 6.57 4	1 3.03 1	6 5.50 5	2 4.34 2	6 5.30 5	8 5.03 7	7 5.73 6	7 4.79 6	14 5.22 12
4. Occupations	12 15.78 4	3 9.09 1	15 13.76 5	4 8.69 3	13 11.50 4	17 10.69 7	16 13.11 7	16 10.95 5	32 11.94 12
5. Awareness of school progress	14 18.42 4	4 12.12 1	18 16.51 5	10 21.73 2	18 15.92 5	28 17.61 7	24 19.67 6	22 15.06 6	46 17.16 12
6. Beliefs about education	8 10.52 3	3 9.09 1	11 10.09 4	6 13.04 2	14 12.38 5	20 12.57 7	14 11.47 5	17 11.64 6	31 11.56 11
7. Financial difficulties	0 0.0 0	0 0.0 0	0 0.0 0	0 0.0 0	2 1.76 1	2 1.25 1	0 0.0 0	2 1.36 1	2 0.74 1
8. Aspirations for children	2 2.63 3	10 30.30 1	12 11.0 4	4 8.69 2	10 8.84 5	14 8.80 7	6 4.91 5	20 13.69 6	26 9.70 11
9. Desire for mobility	3 3.94 2	2 6.06 1	5 4.58 3	3 6.52 2	3 2.65 3	6 3.77 5	6 4.91 4	5 3.42 4	11 4.10 8
10. Desire for qualifications	7 9.21 4	2 6.06 1	9 8.25 5	6 13.04 2	5 4.42 4	11 6.91 6	13 10.65 6	7 4.79 5	20 7.46 11
11. Gender	0 0.0 0	1 3.03 1	1 0.91 1	0 0.0 0	8 7.07 5	8 5.03 5	0 0.0 0	9 6.16 6	9 3.35 6

#### 4.3.1 Controls over the Data

In the analysis of the data, care was taken to compare the parents' interpretations with what the students said previously in school about their family circumstances, when speaking to their counsellors and teachers. Cognisance was also taken of certain teachers' comments about the home backgrounds of particular students. I tried to locate much of this information in the context of what I observed about the home and its surroundings during these brief visits. This provided some means of validating the data.

The data which were obtained from the students' interviews at school, and discussions with parents, and observations during home visits were compared regularly. Where more than one home visit was made, such comparisons indicated that much of what was said on one occasion was consistent with information given on later occasions. Where single visits were made, I was able to compare what the students said during discussions with me at school about their home circumstances and family background.

By employing these kinds of checks on the data, I did not find any great discrepancies about such things as the educational level of parents, family size, financial problems at home, and the desire for mobility and qualifications. During my observations I also deliberately looked out for characteristics about the families, which the students and teachers referred to. This included things like poverty, large families, unemployed family members, part-time jobs in which parents and children were involved, and so on. I also deliberately asked some questions which I had asked earlier on these and other aspects. Even when such questions were not asked, the students and their parents made reference to some of the issues that they brought up in earlier discussions. This included things like their beliefs about education, the jobs which they had in mind, the roles of boys and girls, and knowledge about childrens' progress in school.

However, one aspect which had to be clarified in greater depth was the financial difficulties experienced by the families. The physical and material conditions of the home, and the references made by parents to their "**problems**" generally, confirmed what the parents said to me about "**financial difficulties.**"

References were made to dependence on state welfare grants, loss of income because of unemployment, and so on.

There were also a few isolated cases of students whose information contradicted what their parents had said to me about their reasons for early school leaving. For example, Logan and Prakash from the practical grade at Orchard Lane, and Asha and Sundrie led me to believe that their decisions to leave school early met with the approval of their parents and relatives. However, when I questioned the parents and relatives about this, I learnt that Sundrie and Asha had insisted on leaving school because of **"domestic problems."** Logan's sister informed me that her parents were unaware of her brother's decision; and Prakash's father felt that he had to compromise with his son on the question of leaving school at the end of standard eight to get a **"good job"** while the opportunity presented itself.

The fact that participant observation and other related qualitative research techniques could not be fully employed meant that the data were to some extent limited. For example, I was not able to trace the generation and development of parents' perspectives over a lengthy period. This would have provided a deeper analysis of family circumstances. Nevertheless, the informal interviews and unstructured discussions held with parents provided useful complements to the intensive observation undertaken in the schools over three years. Some of the leads which were picked up at school were probed in depth during the home visits.

#### 4.4 DESCRIPTIONS OF THE HOMES

Descriptions were noted of the homes of both the school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group. This category accounted for 9.36 per cent of the content analysed for the entire sample of the school-leavers; and 8.95 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group.

The homes varied considerably in type, standard and degree of affluence. Generally, those who came from the upper-working-class and middle-class backgrounds lived in neat, well-maintained homes. Others who were less fortunate and who were from the upper and lower working classes lived less comfortably. The less fortunate included Logan, Moonsamy (practical grade, Orchard



Lane), Lennie (practical grade, Orchard Lane), Kesval (ordinary grade, Ridgemount), David (practical grade, Ridgemount), and Ruben (practical grade, Ridgemount).

Many of the students from the lower and upper working classes, and a few middle-class students lived in semi-detached council houses, garages, outbuildings, and old-fashioned brick-and-tile, and wood-and-iron cottages. These included the school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group. The semi-detached houses in the Bombay Heights area consisted of two or three small bedrooms. The walls are not plastered and the houses have no ceilings. Each house has a small front and backyard, and is located in densely built-up surroundings, alongside rows of similar buildings. In a few cases, the houses have been extended and renovated.

The homes and neighbourhoods of some of the working-class students need special mention. The family of Perumal (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) lived in an old, single, detached company-owned house. Families living in such cottages have to share outside, communal toilets and bathrooms. Lennie lived in a rented sparsely furnished flat in Northflats. The walls of the rooms were decorated with pictures of Indian film stars. Asha lived in a small one-bedroomed house. David and Ruben lived in houses where odd pieces of timber were stacked away and used by their fathers for their part-time furniture business during evenings and weekends. These houses were also sparsely furnished and had no ceilings. Jaylal from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane lived very near the African shack settlement of Makopo, and his house was fenced with barbed wire. It was an old brick cottage, without electricity.

Some students like Logan and David did not like living under these conditions. For example, Logan said:

"Northflats is a very rough area with gangsters. My friends and I are very quiet. But some gangsters come and cause trouble, and we get involved. This is why I moved out, and am living with my sister."

David said:

"One day I like to move out of Bombay Heights because of the pollution and disturbance."



Those who rented garages and outbuildings in the Bombay Heights and Lyndale areas also lived in very crowded conditions. Garages have been usually partitioned, providing a single bedroom and a very small kitchen. Raksha (practical grade, Ridgemount), Saras (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane), David and Kesval lived in such homes. However, as housing became available some of these families moved into sub-economic rented council flats in Northflats. The immediate environment in this sprawling, newly-developed township is similar to that in Bombay Heights, but there is more living space in the homes. Each family has at least two or three bedrooms, a lounge, and a kitchen.

Though many of the homes are small and reflect crowded conditions, they are neat and adequately furnished. The upper working-class homes, in particular, had neat settees, colour television sets, and display cabinets.

The majority of the middle-class tertiary education group students lived in comfortable, modern three- or four- bedroomed, economic houses situated mainly in Delhi Vale and in the more affluent sections of Bombay Heights. These are generally well carpeted, tiled, curtained and furnished. Many of these homes had colour television sets, video recorders, fitted kitchens, and wall display units. Those who rented lived in comfortable basements of newly-constructed homes, and in brick- and- tile cottages. The rooms are spacious and well furnished. However, a few students from the tertiary education group lived in conditions similar to the working-class school-leavers.

#### 4.5 FAMILY BACKGROUND

To get some understanding of the influence of the students' families on their educational and career choices, it is necessary to begin by presenting some background information on the cultural climate of the homes. This involves an examination of the educational levels of parents and others, the jobs in which they are engaged, the parents' awareness of their children's school performance, their beliefs about education, and size of families. Such information should be useful in shedding some light on the structure of social relationships in these families, and the kinds of symbolic order of meanings which result. This should also enable us to get a better understanding of the presence or lack of cultural capital necessary for educational

and career planning as discussed by Ashton and Field (1976), Carter (1962) and Bourdieu (1974).

#### 4.6 EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

The educational level of both parents, and of older children who were no longer at school were recorded each time that reference was made to these levels. Such references included parents' descriptions of their educational backgrounds and experiences in school, the students' descriptions of their parents' education; and in some cases where teachers had some knowledge of parents' education. The category dealing with educational levels comprised 18.94 per cent of the content that was analysed for all school-leavers, and 19.77 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group.

Many of the fathers of the lower-working-class school-leavers have at most standard-five or-six education, and several mothers have not been to school. Of the children, some older boys have standard-eight or-nine education, while the girls have between standard-six and-eight. Some of these boys and girls were in the practical grade.

The educational levels of the fathers in the upper-working-class group ranged between standard three and standard eight, while the mothers' levels were between standard five and six. The lower-middle-class parents have between standards six and eight, and the older children at least standard nine.

The educational level of the parents of the tertiary education group is higher than that of the parents of the school-leavers. The lower-middle-class fathers have education from standards eight to ten, while a few have post-standard-ten qualifications. Some mothers have reached standard seven or eight. The two upper-middle-class fathers have university degrees, while the mothers have reached standards four and six respectively.

#### 4.7 SIZE OF FAMILIES

Of the content analysed for all school-leavers 6.10 per cent was in this category; and this category also accounted for 5.22 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education

group. In most of the lower-working-class families there were about four or five children. In some cases, there were six to nine children. There were four such cases of lower-working-class families. In the upper working class, there were about three to four children per family. But even in this group there were some large families. For example, one family had sixteen children, while another had six children.

The lower-middle-class families were smaller. In most cases, there were not more than three children. The families of the tertiary education group also consisted of not more than two to three children per family. However, there were some exceptions. One of these families had twelve children, while another had six.

Once the older children got married they moved away from their parents' homes. Though most of the families of all social classes were of the nuclear type, there was some evidence of the existence and influence of the extended family amongst the school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group. In a few cases, married sons and daughters were still living with their parents. Several parents mentioned that while they were living separately from the rest of the larger kinship group, they still maintained close ties with their brothers and sisters, uncles, aunts, parents and grandparents. During visits to some of these homes I saw family photographs hanging on the walls, which included grandparents, uncles, aunts, and married brothers and sisters.

#### 4.8 OCCUPATIONS

Of the content analysed for all school-leavers, 15.07 per cent was in this category; and this category also accounted for 11.94 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group. While it comprised 16.55 per cent of the content analysed for practical grade school-leavers, it made up 12.93 per cent of the content for ordinary grade school-leavers. Another important difference to note is that this category accounted for 20 per cent of the content analysed for female school-leavers in the practical grade, as against 14.44 per cent for males from this grade.

The fathers of the school-leavers in the lower working class included a delivery van driver, a lorry driver, a painter's

handyman, an electrician's handyman, a railway labourer, and a waiter. Some who were retired or disabled were also in receipt of state welfare pensions. For example, Raksha's father explained how his disability prevented him from being employed:

"I get a disability grant of sixty-one rands per month. The children get nothing because their mother is working. I suffer from epilepsy. It happens all the time, anywhere. So I can't get a job."

Most of the mothers in this group were housewives, and a few worked in factories as service hands and machinists. The boys from this social class who completed standard nine or ten were employed as clerks, while those with lower educational levels worked as fitters and turners, messengers, foremen, and petrol attendants. Some of the girls with a similar level of education were employed in lower-clerical and secretarial jobs.

Amongst the school-leavers in the upper-working-class group, the fathers included cabinet-makers, a fruit and vegetable hawker, a small cartage contractor, a foreman in a shoe factory, the head supervisor of labourers on a sugar estate, a printer, and a lathe machinist. The two cabinet-makers also manufactured furniture and kitchen units in their homes during the evenings and weekends to supplement their income. Their children assisted them with this part-time work. The fruit and vegetable hawker ran a shebeen from his premises, and some of his children also helped in this business. All the mothers in this group were housewives, and some who were widows were in receipt of state welfare grants. The boys from this social class were employed as printers, punch-card operators, builders, electrical apprentices, cabinet-makers and shipping clerks. Some of the girls were clerks, secretaries and cashiers.

In the lower-middle-class group of school-leavers, one of the fathers was a motor car salesman; another owned a small tailor shop; and the third one was a shipping clerk; One of the mothers was a part-time fruit and vegetable hawker, while the other two were housewives.

The tertiary education group consisted of one lower-working-class and one upper-working-class family. The lower-working-class father was a long distance lorry driver, and the upper-working-class father was an electrician. The lower-middle-class fathers included

the owner of a small outfitting business; a commercial traveller; a laboratory process technician; a production line supervisor; the owner of a small jeweller shop; a building inspector; and a supervisor in a clothing factory. One of the mothers worked as a factory machinist, while another was a supervisor in a large discount store. The rest were housewives. The upper-middle-class fathers in this group included a primary school head of department, and a primary school teacher. The mothers in this group were housewives. Some of the older children in this group were at tertiary education institutions. The few who were employed included an insurance agent, a post office technician, a bank clerk, and a social worker.

#### 4.9 PARENTS' AWARENESS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOL PROGRESS

The parents of twenty-three school-leavers, and of all the tertiary education group members gave some indications of their awareness of their children's progress in school. The material included in this category accounted for 13.64 per cent of the total content that was analysed for the entire sample of school-leavers; and 17.16 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group.

The parents' knowledge of their children's progress in school revealed that most of the working-class families, especially the lower-working-class, lacked the necessary cultural capital which Bourdieu (1974) speaks of. It is the children of these parents who were mainly in the practical grade, and who moved into jobs similar to their own. The criteria by which they judged their children's progress were rather limited, and reflected their general ignorance of the workings of the school system. This is not surprising when one considers that these parents have had very little education. Despite this lack of cultural capital, many of them were keen that their children should succeed at school.

Most of these working-class parents of the school-leavers mentioned that the only source they relied on was their children's school reports, but when pressed they could not say how the reports kept them better informed about their children. In a few cases, those whose children were in the ordinary grade said that they were satisfied with their children's performance because they were usually **"busy with their homework"** and that they



"put in extra work" before the examinations. Some parents who met their children's teachers at parents' meetings found out from them, and trusted the teachers' judgements about their children.

For example, Saras's father described the extent to which he relied on her teachers' advice about the choice of her course of study. He said:

"Her teachers helped her to choose the G 57 course or whatever it was. I checked with them and they said it was a good course. So I told her to carry on."

These parents also had a very vague idea of the strengths and weaknesses of their children in particular subjects. While they were anxious that their children should work hard and do well in the examinations, there was much vagueness, confusion and uncertainty as to why it was important to excel in certain subjects. This lack of insight into the school system was particularly widespread among the parents of the school-leavers in the practical grade, who did not know the difference between the two grades or that if their children did well in the practical grade they could be transferred to the ordinary grade. For example, one of these parents, Savy's (Orchard Lane) father said:

"My son was also in the practical grade. At this age I cannot understand the difference between practical and ordinary grades. I left school in 1930. Today, with the modern science and modern education, it takes me a long time to settle into it."

Ruben's father said:

"I didn't feel anything about Ruben being in the practical grade; but I know that it is lower than the academic grade. I don't tell my children anything. I just leave them to choose. My older son was also in the practical grade. I didn't tell him anything because I didn't know that you could transfer to the ordinary grade by repeating standard eight."

Pat's father said:

"He wasn't doing badly, but I did not visit the school to find out. Therefore I couldn't tell you which subjects he is weak or strong in. I also don't know what is the difference between the practical and ordinary grades. Pat told me that the practical was one grade lower. The only thing I advised him to do was to study a little harder to improve himself. I didn't know that it was possible for him to change from practical to ordinary grade."

A similar lack of awareness was evident among the working-class parents whose children were in the ordinary grade. Many were unable to say who helped their children to choose particular courses and subjects. They merely mentioned vaguely that these choices were left to the children and their teachers. There were a few who sought advice from friends and relatives who had post-matriculation qualifications. These included uncles, older brothers and sisters, and cousins.

This lack of awareness amongst the working class became quite glaring when they were compared with the few middle-class parents of the school-leavers, and several of those in the tertiary education group. The latter showed a better understanding of how the educational system was likely to affect the life chances of their children, and how they intended to cope with some of the demands of school. One of these middle-class parents, Nesan's (practical grade, Orchard Lane) father complained that the system of differentiating children into practical and ordinary grades did not benefit those who were "late developers." He therefore got his son to transfer to the ordinary grade in standard eight, but the lad returned to the practical grade within two weeks since he "couldn't cope with the work."

Nesan's father said:

"I was a bit disappointed when Nesan got into the practical grade. I don't see why the school should have these two grades. After they complete primary school, I notice that a lot of children seem to get motivated. Once they are in secondary school, they push themselves up. But if you are in the practical grade, there isn't much motivation."

However, it was the parents of the tertiary education group who displayed the greatest awareness of their children's school progress. Many spoke to their children's subject teachers, the principal, and the guidance counsellor. Some even sought assistance from outside sources, as in the case of Rajen's (Ridgemount) father who said:

"Although I am not used to these modern studies, I made enquiries from his physical science teacher, and from some of my friends who teach at the technikon. I also discussed his choice of course with a retired university lecturer who told me that the science course is an excellent one if Rajen wants to do engineering. I trust this person's judgement as he is a very learned person."

Rabia's (Ridgemount) father said:

"She discussed her reasons for wanting to take the S 7 course, and I agreed with her choice. I knew she was going to take biology, physical science and maths. I feel happy with this because with those subjects she can get into medical school. Without maths and science, she can't do medicine."

Those parents who were in higher-status jobs suggested ways in which they would obtain assistance for their children to improve their performances in subjects which they found difficult. They were prepared to engage the services of experts to provide private tuition in subjects like mathematics and physical science. Not only did they know where to seek such assistance, but they also had the means to pay for it. The fathers of two tertiary education students, who were teachers also offered elementary assistance to their children.

#### 4.10 PARENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT EDUCATION

The parents of eighteen school-leavers, and of eleven tertiary education group students expressed their beliefs about education. Of the total content analysed for the entire group of school-leavers, 8.96 per cent was in this category; and 11.56 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group. It also accounted for 10.54 per cent of the content for male school-leavers, as against 6.59 per cent of content analysed for female school-leavers. Another difference to note is that while this category accounted for 10.94 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from the ordinary grade, it made up 7.58 per cent of the content for those from the practical grade.

Despite the differences in the insight into education revealed between the two social classes, the majority of the parents tended to value education highly. This included several parents who were poorly educated and even uneducated. This trend is consistent with the profound faith which Indians in Natal, especially the descendants of the indentured group, have shown in western education as a means of overcoming economic hardships.

Though there was a general ignorance, vagueness and confusion about the function of schools, many of the lower-working-class parents expressed the wish that they would like their children to have at least a standard-ten education. They did not want



them to struggle in life as they had done. However, many of these parents saw such an education in terms of a short-term benefit of providing a short-term job. Moonsamy's mother, for example, who had not been to school was sad that her son had to leave in standard nine, practical grade. She said:

"His education is little. If he done more studies I feel it will be better for his future. He will get more money, and will not run short of anything. Like I haven't been to school, and I don't even know what's right and wrong."

Some parents also associated education with jobs and income, and mentioned that education leads to an improvement in life-style. The fathers of David, Jaylal and Mayadevi spoke of education in these terms.

David's father : "Today if you haven't got enough education you won't get anywhere. It took me a long time to be where I am now, and I am still looking for my future. The same thing will happen to my children if they haven't got enough education. They won't know what to do, how to do it, and whom to contact. If you haven't got enough education, you won't know what's right and wrong. You got to be taught all the time what to do."

Jaylal's father : "I always tell my children to spend their time studying. 'Better yourselves so you can get a good pass and do something good. With a good job you will get good money.' They can study in between. There is no end to studies. They can use their money to better themselves."

Mayadevi's father : "I encouraged my children to do their best. They must try hard, but I wouldn't force the issue. I told them to do a lot of reading and learn from people, how to study, how to behave. Everything makes up education. Education means income. When they get income, they'll get everything they want in life. If I didn't improve, what would my position have been? I wouldn't have had a house, a car for myself, and a little plot of land for myself."

A similar view was expressed by the only lower-working-class parent in the tertiary education group, Praba's (Ridgemount) father who is a truck driver. However, it was not as short-term and immediate as that of the parents of the lower-working-class school-leavers. He said:

"Education is very important. If I had enough education I wouldn't be a truck driver. I should have got into business or something. This is why I like all my children to be well educated."

The general belief amongst most parents was that without at least standard-ten education, it would be difficult to get a good job. However, some lower-working-class parents of the school-leavers felt that even though their children had to leave school before completing standard ten because of financial difficulties, it was still possible to get jobs through "having the right contacts." For example, Perumal's father said:

"Contacts work even if you have education. I will use my supervisor in the factory as a contact to get my son a job."

The views of the middle-class parents of the tertiary education group stand out in contrast to this belief in contacts. Despite financial problems, many of these parents were prepared to make sacrifices to motivate their children to strive for professional jobs. This meant supporting their children at university, college or technikon. Several parents pointed to the long-term benefits of such an education. The parents of Devigee and Siva from Orchard Lane spoke of education in this way.

Devigee's mother : "I don't want my children to complete matric and then go to work. Today, we are in a good position, so it's best to give our children further education. A good education can let them lead an independent life. Even if Devigee happens to be let down in her marriage one day, with a good education, she can be independent. I also encouraged my son to further his education, but I was very disappointed when he decided to leave university."

Siva's father : "I think in today's world, education is really essential. In the past, we found that only practical experience was enough. Education didn't count much. When I started work, very few fields were open to us. Today, you can get good jobs, as long as you have educational qualifications. If you don't have a good education, you can't lead a good life. You can get by in a menial job, but if you really want to get into a higher position, education is absolutely necessary."

#### 4.11 FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

This category accounted for 6.92 per cent of the total content analysed for the school-leaving group, and 0.74 per cent of the content for the tertiary education group. In the case of the ordinary grade school-leavers, this category made up 8.45 per cent of the content, as against 5.86 per cent for those from the practical grade. While this category made up of 11.40 per cent of the content analysed for male school-leavers from

the ordinary grade, it accounted for 5 per cent of the content for males from the practical grade. Another difference worth noting is that it made up 6.21 per cent of the content for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, and 8.28 per cent for those from Ridgemount.

Many of these parents who were keen that their children should get enough education to improve their position in life often stressed that they themselves came from very poor families, and this had disrupted their schooling. Some of them were quite determined that their children should not suffer a similar fate. For example, Suraya's (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) father said:

**"From the hardships, I have been through I found life very difficult. I decided that my child should not undergo what I underwent. With a good education, she will not battle in life like I did. My wife also struggled."**

Despite this determination to succeed through education, it was mainly the children of the lower working class who had to leave school early, mainly because of financial problems at home. These students usually ended up in jobs which were not much better than their parents. On the other hand, the children from the tertiary education group of some middle-class parents who had also struggled in life at one time were provided with better opportunities. There were at least six such students. Their parents encouraged them to aspire to long-term career and educational goals.

There were parents from both the middle and the working class who had to leave school early to take over certain family responsibilities at an early age. Many of them lived in extended families, and when their fathers died, or elder brothers or uncles were unemployed these people had to seek employment to supplement the family's income.

Similar trends are noticeable when one examines the circumstances that led to the early school leaving of some of the lower-working-class students in the practical grade in both schools. They had to leave because of financial circumstances. There were large families to support. Families had incurred debts. In a few cases, the only source of income was a small state welfare grant. For example, Raksha whose father was suffering from epilepsy and who received such an allowance, had to leave school

in the middle of standard eight to take care of him. There were five boys who had to leave because of financial problems, and who took on jobs as as handymen, filing clerks and apprentices. One of the girls got an office job as a secretarial assistant, while three others were unemployed and were looking for similar work. Some of the boys did not hesitate to leave school suddenly when they heard of certain vacancies. They did not wish to miss the opportunity since it would be difficult to get jobs later on. For example, one boy got a job as a packer in a clothing factory, while another was employed as a handyman in an upholstering firm, and a third as a counterhand at a video-hiring shop.

The following extracts give some indication of the financial problems that led to early school leaving in the case of some school-leavers.

Sagren's (ordinary grade, Ridgemount) father : "My eldest son is no longer living with me, so we no longer get money from him. Sagren knew that our living standard has fallen, and he told me he was willing to leave school and go to work. I did not want to force him, but if he got a job it would help the family. He wanted to show his appreciation for what I did for the children. We are living as one family. It's for their future."

John's (practical grade, Orchard Lane) father : "John had to leave school because we could not manage on my earnings. I also heard that the teachers advised them that if they get a job they should leave school. He got a job at a clothing factory so he left school in standard nine. But a little later the staff was reduced, and he lost his job."

Sheila's mother : "The family felt it very hard since my husband passed away. I collect a state welfare grant. What can we do with so little money? Sheila likes to dress and eat well. I didn't want her to leave school. She is the youngest and I wanted her to continue. But what can I do? We need the money; and I couldn't force her to go to school."

These examples give some idea of how the poor socio-economic status of lower-working-class Indians contributes to the reproductive function of class through family culture. Though the children and the parents were ambitious to acquire a decent education and to get into well-paid jobs, the financial circumstances of the family proved to be an obstacle. The youngsters had to take what was available, thus severely restricting their choice.



However, the middle-class parents were quite emphatic that though they had to leave school before completing secondary education, they were going to provide a brighter future for their children. Compared with the working class, this group was better educated and had acquired some mobility through struggle and determination. They were therefore in a better position to motivate their children and to provide the necessary support. The children were also keen to proceed to college or university so that they could eventually get professional jobs.

An example of this ambition is seen in the case of Nesan's father who said:

**"When I was in standard eight, and was sixteen years old, I lost my dad. I had to look after my whole family. But Nesan is alright. I don't see why he should go out and work immediately. I want him to go to university. I work very hard for the sake of my children."**

#### 4.12 PARENTS' ASPIRATIONS FOR THEIR CHILDREN

With few exceptions, almost all the parents of the school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group spoke about their aspirations for their children. This category accounted for 9.97 per cent of the content analysed for the entire group of school-leavers, and 9.70 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group. While it comprised 11.18 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, it made up 7.69 per cent of the content for those from Ridgemount.

Many of the lower-working-class parents of the school-leavers were vague and imprecise when stating what jobs they wanted for their children. Some were reluctant to express any job preferences, and said that they left the choice to their children. All that concerned them was that the job should be **"nice"** and that **"the money should be good."** This was not so much allowing a free choice, as much as their inadequacy to advise about jobs in the modern world.

Some of these parents wanted their children to proceed beyond standard ten. But here again there was a lack of awareness. They were not only ignorant of their children's progress in school, but also did not realise that their children who were in the practical grade could not go to any tertiary education institution. It was only the parents of some of the lower-working-

class school-leavers in the ordinary grade who made some effort to find out about the nature of jobs which their children spoke about, or about admission requirements for university or college. Though they were ignorant about this, they made enquiries from teachers, relatives, friends, and neighbours. However, even in these cases, the parents' final concern was that the jobs should "pay well."

These extracts by Saras's father and Champa's (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) mother give an indication of the extent to which they relied on other people's judgements.

Saras's father : "I want her to go for further studies.

She wants to take up computer programming. I will always give her the privilege. I said, 'do what you think is right.' Computer programming is a very good thing. I found out from the teachers and they said it's a very good idea."

Champa's mother : "Champa wants to take up teaching and I am quite happy with her choice. I like her to do some government work like teaching. I don't know why, but I just like it. One of my nephews works for the Post Office, and he told me that there are lots of benefits in a government job. Teachers get good salaries and things like that. One of my cousins who is a teacher also told me that it's a very nice job. I like to have at least one teacher in my family."

The vague and unspecific aspirations which these parents had for their children can be compared with those of Ashton and Field's (1976) "careerless", and Carter's (1966) "solid working-class" families. The parents in this study, however, showed greater concern for the future and the security of their children. This concern stemmed mainly from their own experiences of struggling against poverty, and the desire to improve their lot in life. But when seen against their lack of knowledge and insight into the availability of jobs, their aims were really short-term. They were not in a position to motivate their children to look for jobs outside the range of those which family members and neighbours had. These are the school-leavers who ended up as packers in factories, handymen, counterhands, or stayed at home and soon got married. Very few were able to get into lower-clerical and secretarial jobs.

The upper-working-class parents of the school-leavers also revealed some of these tendencies. While they were not as re-

stricted to the immediate concern of money, they nevertheless displayed several characteristics of short-term planning as outlined by Ashton and Field (1976). For example, they wanted their children to take up jobs that are normally associated with short-term prospects, as in the skilled-manual trades, technical occupations, and certain types of lower-clerical and secretarial work. Such preferences were expressed by the following parents:

David's father : "My workmates told me that if David is not taking up further studies, the best thing for him is to take up a trade. At the moment, there is a shortage of fitters and turners. There is also a demand for bricklayers, carpenters, joiners and welders."

Ruben's father : "He has the freedom to choose, but I like to take him into the furniture industry where I have worked for thirty-two years. It's quite a nice job. If he works in the same factory where I am, then he shouldn't have any problem fitting in."

John's father : "John has done well in woodwork at school. I encouraged him to take up a trade in that. My other sons who have taken up trades also told me it's a good job. He will earn well in a trade. He will also be qualified. At present he is working in a clothing factory, and that isn't a good job. It's an ordinary job with low wages."

John's elder brother also commented. He said:

"I told him what I was able to do. I can set the mould, handle the tools etc. I used to make a lot of things at work, bring these home, and show John how to make them. I work with sheet metal, and I'll be happy if my brother also got into something like this. He may also get into the engineering section as a turner, or as a journeyman in the carpentry section."

Since the parents themselves are engaged in such jobs we can see the effects of reproduction of social class and the family. It is the work experiences of these parents, and the market situation which lead them to have such job preferences for their children. However, when compared with the lower working class, their slightly better material resources allow them greater freedom in short-term planning.

Some of these upper-working-class parents wanted their sons to get into trades because this provided job security. This judgement stemmed mainly from their own experiences in certain

jobs which provided a stable income. David's father and Ruben's, for example, earned extra money by making furniture at home in the evenings and weekends. Their sons helped them in this venture. The parents commented that the boys were good at handling tools, moulds and so on, and could easily get into related trades where the **"money was good."**

Despite this general lack of awareness and the commitment to short-term planning a strong feature of the culture of many families in this study, irrespective of class or religious differences, is their desire to improve their positions by striving for better jobs, or to rise to higher levels within existing jobs. Some in semi-skilled jobs and trades even mentioned that despite obstacles such as poor education or lack of education, finance and so on they were not content to remain in their present positions. They aimed for jobs which offered more money, more responsibility, and which demanded certain higher levels of skills.

They were also emphatic that they did not want their children to struggle in life as they had done. When they said that they wanted their children to get better jobs than their own, the criterion which they used was their own education or more frequently the lack of it. For example, those who were employed as drivers or mechanics did not want their children to do strenuous, physical and risky jobs. They preferred jobs which demanded mental activity, for which a higher level of education was needed. For example, Jaylal's father said:

**"I don't want my son to take up a job where there is hard physical work, where he has to sweat. Hard physical work is like the job that I'm doing, driving a catage truck. I want Jaylal to get a better, maybe office-type job where he can have an easier time."**

#### 4.13 DESIRE FOR OCCUPATIONAL AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

The parents of thirteen school-leavers, and eight students from the tertiary education group commented on this aspect. This category made up 4.27 per cent of the content analysed for the entire sample of school-leavers, and 4.10 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group. In the school-leaving group it accounted for 5.47 per cent of content analysed for the ordinary grade, as against 3.44 per cent of content analysed for the practical grade. Another dif-



ference to note is that it comprised 5.27 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, as against 2.36 per cent of the content analysed for those from Ridgemount.

This desire to improve their life chances was evident among the working-class and middle-class families. Those in the upper working class were quite prepared to move from one job to another in search of better pay and greater security, even though they had to put up with such things as shift work. This determination to succeed is illustrated in the following account of David's father who began work as a labourer in a factory, but later became a qualified cabinet maker.

"When I got this job, the firm wanted a standard-eight certificate which I didn't have. I only had standard-two education. But I kept on asking my bosses what can I do to move up. They told me how to start from a labourer, you have to become a hand-sanding worker, and then move into the machine shop, working on the timber. I did all those jobs, and it took me fifteen years to become a cabinet-maker. Today, if you have a standard-eight or higher education, it takes you only three years. I had to go to Olifantsfontein to do my trade test. I got a 'C' pass."

Though many of these parents were disappointed that their children were unable to get into jobs which they preferred, they were satisfied that at least their children got into jobs which offered "some chances for improvement." Juggie's father, for example, felt that while his son worked as a handyman to a welder, he would have the chance to "learn the trade" and eventually become a journeyman. Sagren's father was pleased that his son was promoted to a stock controller in a large clothing firm within one year. He said:

"Sagren is working for a very big clothing firm. There's scope for him to move up. I think it's great for a young man like him to get a promotion within one year. It took me twenty years to become a supervisor. He made good progress, and it's the money that counts. Money is greater than anything else today."

The parents of the middle-class school-leavers were even more emphatic about their desire for their children's mobility. For example, Prakash's father wanted his son to qualify as a radio and television technician, or as an electrician, and then to set up his own small business. He mentioned that his friends and relatives would be prepared to help with finance. Though this did not materialise, he was still pleased because

Prakash had joined a large motor company where "there are plenty of opportunities for promotion." He cited cases of mechanics who worked for this company and have since risen to the position of foremen. He said:

"All I'm concerned about at the moment is that Prakash gets his 'A' grade card. This card will enable him to join any of the big firms in the motor industry as a top grade mechanic."

Suraya's father did not want her to struggle in life like he did. He said:

"Being a tenant in this area, we are not in a high bracket. I really wanted Suraya to do her best and to take up medicine, but she decided on something else. I was not going to force her. But, because of the hardships I have been through I found life very difficult. Therefore I decided that our children should not undergo what we went through. If she gets a better job, it will be good for her future. She must not struggle like how her mother and myself struggled. We were hawkers. She must earn enough so that one day when she is married, her husband and herself can have their own house."

The desire for mobility among the parents of the tertiary education group was closely linked with the question of status. Many parents wanted their children to become doctors or pharmacists, and mentioned specifically that they would be unhappy if their children took up skilled trades. Teaching would be acceptable only as a last resort. Some openly stated that they would like to have "at least one doctor in the family."

#### 4.14 DESIRE FOR EDUCATIONAL AND TRADE QUALIFICATIONS

The parents of thirteen school-leavers, and eleven tertiary education group students spoke about the need for their children to acquire qualifications. This category accounted for 3.05 per cent of the content analysed for all school-leavers, and 7.46 per cent of the content for the tertiary education group. In the school leaving group, it accounted for 2.79 per cent of the content analysed for those from Orchard Lane, as against 3.55 per cent of the content for school-leavers from Ridgemount.

Coupled with the desire for upward mobility, many of these parents, especially those in the middle class, were strong believers in the acquisition of educational qualifications as a prerequisite for obtaining good jobs. Even amongst the working class, some of the parents said that their own chances

of getting good jobs were affected by their lack of adequate qualifications. For example, Saras's father, a lower-working-class parent said:

"Today, without education you are nowhere. You don't even stand a chance. When I went looking for a job, the first thing they wanted to know is, 'what qualifications have you got?' If only I had the privilege, I would have carried on studying. But my father died, and things were hard at home. I had to go to work."

Some parents in the upper working class were even more conscious of the need for educational qualifications as a means for getting "promotion" in existing jobs. They complained that even though they worked for about thirty years in certain trades, they earned "very little" because of their "poor education". They felt that to get to higher positions education is "absolutely essential," and therefore their advice to their children was to "get good exam passes" and to continue with part-time studies if they are forced to leave school before standard ten.

As far as their own jobs were concerned, these parents saw the need to obtain trade qualifications to improve their positions. They were also prepared to make such sacrifices as sticking to one firm for many years so that they could learn much about the job, establish contacts, and ultimately improve their qualifications. They felt that this would enable them to gain mobility within the job itself.

Some middle-class parents who were forced to leave school early were also keen to improve their educational standing. Prakash's father, for example, took the opportunity to attend seminars arranged by his employers so as to "improve" himself to become a more successful salesman. Suraya's father was not content to stick to a job which he regarded as unstimulating and unrewarding. He looked for a mentally stimulating job and was prepared to undertake part-time studies to achieve this. This can be seen in the following account given by him:

"I was a fruit and vegetable hawker, but I ran out of luck and the business began dropping. The job was also routine and very tiring. My present job as a shipping clerk is fantastic. I am not working as hard as I was, physically. Now, I am working hard, but mentally it's rewarding. I know I am going to be better off. That's why I'm putting in extra work by taking evening lectures at the technikon. I can see it as very promising."

Nesan's father who owned a small tailor shop was also conscious of the need to acquire qualifications. He enrolled for a diploma through an overseas fashion institute so that he would be recognised in this field. This study was done through correspondence.

However, this desire for educational qualifications was most pronounced amongst the middle-class parents of the tertiary education group. Those who were teachers acquired university degrees through part-time studies. Even those in clerical and supervisory jobs made efforts to improve their qualifications so that they could be promoted. Rajen's father relates how he strove for qualifications:

"I worked for the borough council and couldn't get promotion because I didn't have enough educational qualifications. I had only standard six. Then I began to do part-time study, and at the age of thirty-six I passed standard eight, and I got my matric at thirty-eight. I went on to write my trade test at Olifantsfontein. This qualified me for my job as an inspector. Today, these studies have helped me. I keep telling my son that knowledge is the way to success, and therefore he should work hard. Education is life. I speak from experience. Now that I improved myself, and am at the peak of my career, people look up to me. It is education that has helped me. Knowledge has become my power. If my children left school in standard seven or eight, I would be very disappointed because they are throwing away their chances. We are working so hard to give them a good education, but the freedom of choice is in their hands."

During the visits to some of the homes of the families in this group, I became aware of the extent to which they valued educational credentials. Where family members acquired tertiary educational qualifications, I saw photographs of these people in academic dress. Diplomas and certificates were framed and also displayed on the walls.

They saw the acquisition of educational qualifications as a means of gaining social status. For example, Devigee's mother did not want her daughter to continue in the practical grade because "she will not be able to take up anything decent, not even teaching." She was not keen that her daughter should seek employment after standard ten. That was about the only avenue open to the practical grade matriculants.

Other parents whose children were in the ordinary grade were anxious that their sons and daughters should be successful



in school and later on at university so that they could become doctors, engineers, pharmacists, psychiatrists and chartered accountants. Many of them advised their children to take the prestigious science courses in physics and chemistry so that these could lead to careers in medicine, engineering, pharmacy and dentistry.

The parents of school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group, of both social classes placed much emphasis on educational qualifications for other reasons, too. As members of a minority group, they were very conscious of their disadvantage in a labour market which often discriminated against them on the grounds of race. Some stated that when they started work **"very few fields were open to Indians, but today there are more openings."** However, to get into these technical, clerical and other jobs it was important to have **"good educational qualifications."** There is therefore a strong desire to use the educational system as one of the mechanisms for overcoming any disadvantages that the group has previously suffered.

In particular, the parents of the tertiary education group felt that it was important to get into high-status professional jobs to overcome race discrimination. Devan's (Orchard Lane) father, for example, said that if his son did not qualify for admission to the medical school, he should try to get into other professions:

**"Opportunities, as far as Non-Whites are concerned are not so open. It is very competitive. If he is unsuccessful in gaining admission to the medical school, then he should think of other avenues such as engineering, or chartered accountancy."**

#### 4.15 GENDER

The analysis of the culture of these families would be incomplete if the question of gender were not taken into account. This is important if we are to understand why there are differential expectations of males and females despite the strong belief of many of the parents in educational qualifications, and the desire for occupational and social mobility.

The parents of eleven school-leavers, and six students from the tertiary education group expressed views about the roles of boys and girls. This category made up 3.66 per cent of the

total content analysed for the school-leaving group, and 3.35 per cent of the content for the tertiary education group. It also accounted for 7.61 per cent of the content analysed for female school-leavers as opposed to 1.02 per cent for males. Other differences to note are that it comprised 3.10 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, while the content analysed for those from Ridgemount was 4.73 per cent.

During the visits to the homes, it was clear that the roles of men and women are differentiated by the subordinate roles of women. The relationship between husbands and wives, for example, revealed an authority structure based upon clear-cut, unambiguous definitions of the status of the two sexes. The dominant roles of fathers and the subordinate roles of mothers were evident in many homes. Historically, the attitudes and values towards the roles of the two sexes seem to originate from the joint family system.

In many of the working-class homes my discussions had to be conducted only with the fathers. Despite my request for both parents to be present, most mothers kept away. Perhaps these families considered it inappropriate that mothers should discuss matters such as their children's educational and occupational future with some outsider. Such discussions should be left to the fathers. In the few cases, where mothers were present they remained silent for much of the time, and when they did speak they were careful not to contradict what their husbands had said.

The subordinate role of females was also judged from the activities of boys and girls at home, and outside of home. Girls were given some freedom, but remained mostly within the home. In many instances, the choice was either **"housework"**, homework, reading or sewing. As far as domestic tasks were concerned, boys were not expected to help as much around the house.

These differences were most glaring in the lower-and upper-working-class groups of school-leavers. The boys in these groups spent much time playing outdoor games like soccer. Girls were engaged

mainly in homework, and also with cooking and washing. By contrast, the middle-class girls in the tertiary education group were given more freedom to engage in activities outside the home. As in the case of boys, they were allowed to join squash clubs, to attend speech and drama lessons and so on. However, like the working-class girls many of them also helped with housework.

Some parents were not too happy if their daughters deviated too far from tradition. This was especially so when it came to establishing relationships with the opposite sex. Sundrie's father, from the lower working class, for example, favoured arranged marriages and became very upset when his daughter began going out with a boy whom she met on her own. He said:

"We were in the old tradition. We had a little bit of Indian culture with us, and we kept to that. That is better than becoming too modern. That's how I brought up my children. My parents were very strict, and we feared them. Today's children spoil everything. There's too much of parties and dancing. Our culture is being lost. Western culture is good, but our culture and tradition is also great. People who follow our culture, especially the girls will not lose themselves. The increasing divorces among Indians is because we are fast losing our culture."

Some of the middle-class parents of the tertiary education group expressed similar views about the behaviour expected of their daughters. While they were keen that their daughters should continue with their education, they stressed that girls should be "respectable" and know "how to behave" at university or college. Such comments were not made about boys. Hafiza's (Ridgemount) mother did not want her to go to university. She said:

"You know what happens to the girls when they go out of the house. They do not go straight. They may misbehave. Hafiza is a good girl, but I don't want her to be far away from home. She can study in Durban and stay at home, instead of boarding elsewhere."

Despite these beliefs, the parents of the school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group were generally in favour of their daughters continuing with their studies. However, while many working-class parents wanted their daughters to receive at least standard-ten education, they did not expect them to become career girls. Their aims were really short-term. While they agreed that their daughters could pursue some form

of employment, they were always conscious of the fact that these girls would eventually marry and leave home. However, if they are employed they could help their husbands in times of need. This can be seen in the views expressed by Saras's mother who said:

"It's up to her to study. We haven't got that much education. At least if she can study she can help her husband. If she is married, and her family is struggling, she can go to work. With a good education, she can get a good job. If it's her husband's wish to send her to work, we can't stop her."

The father of one of the school-leavers said that "since girls would eventually finish off with the pots" they could do some kind of secretarial or general office work in the meantime. A girl's job is therefore a matter of secondary importance because it is thought to be inevitable that she will soon marry. Parents' aspirations for their daughters are therefore based on a different set of criteria from that of their sons.

However, some of the upper-working-class and middle-class parents saw their daughters' careers in a slightly different light. For them, a good education and a secure job was essential if their daughters are to be independent should their marriages fail. For example, Rabia's father remarked:

"Today, family stability is not like before. A woman can't depend on her husband all the time. If her marriage fails, she must be able to be self employed."

Many middle-class parents wanted their daughters to get as good an education as their sons. They expressed the wish that their daughters should qualify as doctors, pharmacists and so on. For example, the following comments by Mary's (tertiary education group, Ridgemount) father illustrate this:

"I think if girls have got the aptitude and the interest, they should continue with their education beyond matric. A girl's place is not necessarily at home. Girls can also serve the community. It should be a matter of give and take between men and women. Men should share certain duties with women at home. So I feel that girls should get as good an education as boys."

One common feature which characterised the parents of school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group, and of both social classes was that they often spoke about jobs which should be "suitable for women." This meant that such jobs should allow



their daughters sufficient time to attend to household duties after working hours; not be physically exhausting, risky or dangerous; and should be **"nice and clean."** Middle-class parents mentioned teaching and social work in this category, while working-class parents of girls in the practical grade mentioned jobs such as dressmaking, switchboard operator, receptionist, and clerk.

#### 4.16 CONCLUSION

When the school-leavers and the tertiary education group are considered together, some common elements of Indian culture are clearly evident. These include the high value placed on education, and the strong belief in the acquisition of qualifications. There is also a deep desire for occupational and social mobility, with the parents being willing to make sacrifices so as to ensure that their children will not suffer similar hardships as themselves. Another common cultural characteristic is the differential expectations of the roles of males and females.

Much of these cultural patterns make sense if viewed against the background of the position of Indians as an intermediate status group, striving for improvement. The profound faith placed in the value of western education as a means of achieving mobility in a race-divided society is a significant aspect of the history of indentured Indians. The roots of the majority of the students in the sample can be traced to this group. It is also within the joint family system of this indentured group that the rigid social division between the two sexes has its origins.

However, the way in which these parents influenced their children into different expectations about education and work depended upon practices in families from the different social classes, and the information which the parents had about the education system and job opportunities. The meanings which parents attached to education, educational qualifications and life chances were influenced by their cultural backgrounds and their positions within the social structure.

We notice, for example, that there is a marked difference in the distribution of knowledge between the parents of the school-

leavers and the tertiary education group. There are also differences within the school-leaving group. The majority of the working-class children in particular were socialised into thinking about education and choice of jobs in a very concrete, context-bound way. This was due mainly to the lack of cultural capital which in turn was affected by the low levels of education of the parents, the large family, and the nature of their work experiences. In the main, these children's visions were restricted to short-term concerns about education and jobs, and were similar in some respects to the **"careerless"** (Ashton and Field, 1976), **"tradition-directed"** (Veness, 1962), and **"positional"** family (Bernstein, 1971b).

Though many of these lower-working-class parents were keen that their children should get at least standard-ten education, they did not have the necessary knowledge to advise and motivate them to aspire to jobs with long-term prospects. The lack of finance was also another obstacle. Despite their financial problems, they did not want their children to suffer the way they had done and were keen that they should get well-paid jobs. Education was seen mainly as a means of providing a good income. Similar short-term aims were revealed in their perception of careers for their daughters. Education should enable girls to get jobs which help to supplement the family income. Daughters must be helpful wives, rather than career women.

Though the upper working class was not as rigidly confined to such immediate concerns of income, their aims can also be classified as short-term. However, since they have slightly better resources than the lower working class they have more freedom in their short-term planning. They were concerned that their children should look for jobs that not only paid well, but also offered some security and opportunity for promotion. They also saw the need for education and trade qualifications if their children were to obtain such jobs.

However, many of the jobs which they mentioned are not really any better than the ordinary jobs which family members and neighbours have. In this sense, their aspirations can be classified as short-term. As in the case of the lower working class, this is also probably due to the lack of cultural capital. Though they were pro-education and pro-school, these parents

did not have any great insight into what the school offered, the choice of subjects, selection procedures, streaming patterns, and so on. It was mainly the middle-class parents of the tertiary education group who possessed this kind of capital.

The perceptions of these upper-working-class parents are derived not only from family culture, but also from their experiences of work. Those who were in trades saw their opportunity to supplement their income by engaging in part-time work. This offered them security, and they felt it was possible to move up the rung into supervisory positions. Workmates also encouraged them to get their sons into trades that were in demand. Lower-clerical and secretarial work was considered to be suitable for girls. Their main concern about their daughters' jobs was that these should offer some security and independence should their marriages fail.

The aims of middle-class parents of the school-leavers may be considered as long-term in some respects. Though they were not as familiar with the workings of the educational system as the parents of the tertiary education group, they nevertheless showed a better understanding than the working-class parents. This is probably due to their higher educational levels, and the fact that they had acquired some mobility through struggle and determination. They were also in a better financial position and could provide the necessary financial support and motivation. Though their children got into jobs which were not completely to their liking, they were nevertheless keen that these should be used as stepping stones to better jobs. They felt that this was possible through promotion and by improved qualifications.

For this group of parents, qualifications are not only a means to do one's job better. Because they are very conscious of their position in a stratified society, they see qualifications as the power to move up the social scale. This attitude is even more characteristic of the tertiary education group, and is derived from their social status.

Finally, in all groups of school-leavers the reproductive function of social class is evident in the families. In each of the social classes, social background and its attendant values combine with school experiences to facilitate entry into certain jobs which are associated with these groups. For example, many

of the lower-working-class students, like their parents, were forced to leave school early because of financial problems and family commitments, and went into jobs that were only slightly better than those of their parents. The lack of finance and cultural capital, the relatively poor educational level of the students, and the general unavailability of jobs are some factors which contribute to the reproduction of class. On a more general level, they also reproduce the status position of Indians in the society at large.

The reproductive function of gender is also seen in the differentiation of roles between the sexes, especially among the working class. For many of them a girl's job is a matter of secondary importance because it is thought to be inevitable that she will soon marry. This view probably stems from the culture of the traditional Indian joint family, and is reinforced by the ideology on which the sexual division of labour is founded.

## 5. SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The experiences of the school-leavers are located within the power relationships of the institution of the school. These relationships deal mainly with the ways in which the students are processed through selection, labelling, and career-counselling. Such an analysis would be useful for understanding how students from different social-class backgrounds, and grades experience the transition from school into different sectors of the labour market.

This chapter focuses on broad issues such as the general policies of both schools, and their provisions for ordinary and practical grade students, as well as specific issues such as the nature of careers lessons, individual counselling sessions, teachers' perceptions and labelling of students. Structural and interpretive perspectives have also been used to examine the students' experiences and perceptions of school and education in general, and their career aspirations.

### 5.2 COLLECTION OF DATA

Data were gathered by observing guidance lessons, and general lessons across the curriculum which were the main categories of events that occurred in the schools on a regular, scheduled basis. In addition, other events of a non-routine nature were also observed and studied. These included individual counselling sessions, parents' meetings, talks given by visiting speakers and films on careers.

#### 5.2.1 Visits to Schools

In order to observe guidance lessons, general lessons and individual counselling sessions, weekly visits were usually made to each of the two schools. However, at certain times this was not possible because of examinations, school concerts, plays, excursions and so on. Under such circumstances fortnightly visits were made, but on average schools were visited weekly. On some occasions it was also possible to observe general lessons, individual counselling sessions, and to conduct individual and group discussions and interviews. This programme was main-



tained throughout the three years that I visited the schools.

I was also present at parents' meetings, talks given by visiting speakers, and the showing of films on careers. Meetings were held for the parents of the ordinary grade students at Ridgemount. Orchard Lane did not have any such meetings in the first two years of this study, and when it did have one in the third year for the ordinary grade students in standard ten, I was informed about this only after the meeting had taken place. However, the principal, the guidance counsellor, teachers and students supplied me with information about this meeting. Films on careers, and talks by visiting speakers were arranged only by Orchard Lane, and I was present on all of these occasions.

### 5.2.2 Observations, Discussions and Interviews

The techniques used to gather data included tape recordings of interviews and discussions, and observations of lessons and other activities in school recorded in field notes. The lessons which were observed were chosen on the basis of random and selective sampling procedures which were outlined in Chapter One of Part Two. The general lessons across the curriculum in the practical grade included business methods, geography, English, science, mathematics, salesmanship, housecraft, biology, woodwork, metalwork and history. The lessons in the ordinary grade included English, mathematics, accountancy, physical science, biology and geography.

The sampling of the scheduled guidance lessons and general lessons across the curriculum was based on the timetable arrangements for each class. Allowing for time set aside for examinations and controlled tests, there were approximately thirty scheduled guidance lessons per class per year, and it was decided to sample at least fifty per cent of these. However, a fifty per cent sample was not always possible since the schools' revision and other programmes sometimes curtailed the number of lessons, especially when the students were in standard ten. Guidance lesson periods were also sometimes used for other subjects which required additional time for completion of the syllabus. Both teachers and students also felt that these other lessons were more important for examination purposes. All that I could manage during this time was about forty per cent.

As for the general lessons across the curriculum, it was not important to have as many since this study deals mainly with educational and career pathways, and is not concerned with an in-depth study of the entire school curriculum. Therefore, it was deemed sufficient to observe at least fifteen. Here too, at certain times it was not possible to obtain the required number of lessons because of the frequent disruption in the schools' programmes. Some lessons were chosen purely on the basis of chance; others because the students found them "interesting," "difficult," "related to future careers," and so on. Individual counselling sessions were not sampled since these were not conducted on a scheduled basis. The entire range was observed.

Since it was practically impossible to observe and write notes on the whole lesson, it was deemed necessary to sample units of time within these lessons. Every lesson lasted thirty-five minutes, and the time sampling involved approximately one third (eleven minutes) of this. Intense observations and detailed notes were made of three minutes selected from the beginning, five minutes from the middle, and three minutes from the conclusion of each lesson. In addition to this procedure of random time sampling, general and selective observations and notes were made on the whole lesson to get some idea of the atmosphere prevailing in each of the classrooms. Specific attention was paid to interactions, exchange of meanings, negotiations and so on.

The duration of individual counselling sessions, parents' meetings, talks by visiting speakers, and films on careers varied greatly. Therefore a standard procedure, such as that adopted for guidance lessons and general lessons, could not be used. Nevertheless, selective sampling of time was used. This involved recording of relevant and important aspects concerning the students' educational and career choices, which were selected freely at different stages, and were not necessarily confined to the beginning, middle and conclusion of each session. Here again, in addition, general observation and notes were made of the whole session.

Observations made during lessons, individual counselling sessions, parents' meetings and other occasions at school were discussed with the students and their teachers. Unstructured discussions,

as well as focussed interviews, were held with teachers, counselors and principals- all on an individual basis. Discussions and interviews with the students were conducted on an individual and group basis. These were the friendship groups which have formed the sampling frame of this study.

Some aspects around which the discussions and interviews with the students centred included: reasons for their choice of courses and subjects; subjects which they found difficult; relationships with teachers; their impressions of guidance lessons, general lessons, counselling sessions, school and its policies; excursions, films on careers, and talks by visiting speakers; relationships with students in the other grade; and their career aspirations.

Teachers were questioned about their general impressions of the particular class units in which they taught; how students in these classes, in particular those from the sample, responded to their subjects; specific aspects of subjects which presented problems to the school-leavers and students from the tertiary education group; students who captured their attention; predictions about the career or educational routes of the students in the sample; the proposed lower grade syllabus in their particular subjects and how this differed from the present practical grade syllabus.

Discussions with the guidance counsellors centred around the aims of their career-counselling programmes; the rationale underlying these programmes; the suitability of these programmes for the school-leavers, as well as for the tertiary education group; specific problems encountered by these students during individual counselling sessions; their assessments of the educational and career preferences of these students; the phasing out of the practical grade, and the implications of the new lower grade for students' educational and career routes.

Discussions with the principals of the two schools threw much light on matters of policy and practice concerning the selection of courses, subjects, changing from one grade to another or from one subject level to another; the basis on which teachers were allocated to practical and ordinary grade classes; time allocated to subjects in the two grades; the examination and evalua-



tion of practical and ordinary grade students; parents' meetings; educational excursions; and extra tuition for the two grades.

The principals and guidance counsellors in both schools also supplied me with information about: matriculation examination results for the previous three years; the history of their schools since their establishment; and the rules governing the old and the new systems of differentiated education.

Several of the issues outlined above had to be clarified with different participants since frequent references were made to these, especially by the school-leavers. By cross-checking the students' interpretations with those of the principals, guidance counsellors and teachers, I was able to gain much insight into factors which shaped the construction of educational and career pathways. In addition, the students' views enabled me to see how their own choices and decisions had changed over a period of time. An in-depth probe of these several areas was also crucial for an understanding of how the interpretive as well as structural dimensions of school influenced the students' educational and career choices.

The sources and amounts of data which were collected are indicated in table 5.1 (on page 258). A total time of approximately 256 hours of observation and recording formed the data base.

TABLE 5.1  
SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF DATA COLLECTED

SOURCE	ORCHARD			LANE			RIDGEMOUNT					
	PRACTICAL GRADE			ORDINARY GRADE			PRACTICAL GRADE			ORDINARY GRADE		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
1. Tape recordings of general lessons	38	11	7	32	11	6	34	11	6	36	11	7
2. Observations of general lessons recorded in field notes	38	15	10	32	15	8	34	15	9	36	15	9
3. Tape recordings of guidance lessons	43	11	8	40	11	7	42	11	8	43	11	8
4. Observation of guidance lessons recorded in field notes	43	15	11	40	15	10	42	15	11	43	15	11
5. Tape recordings of individual counselling sessions	17	20	6	20	20	7	11	20	4	16	20	5
6. Observations of individual counselling sessions recorded in field notes	17	25	7	20	25	8	11	25	5	16	25	7
7. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions with teachers, counsellors, and principals	42	15	11	34	15	9	37	15	9	44	15	11
8. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions with individual students	16	15	4	22	15	6	10	15	3	15	15	4
9. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions with groups of students	7	20	2	6	20	2	5	20	2	6	20	2
10. Tape recordings of parents' meetings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	30	2
11. Tape recordings of talks given by visiting speakers	2	15	1	4	15	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
12. Observations of films recorded in field notes	2	20	1	3	20	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

KEY

A = number of sessions

B = approximate time per session in minutes

C = total observation/recording time in hours  
(calculated in round figures)

### 5.2.3 Some Problems Encountered with Data Collection

Though the collection of data proceeded smoothly a few problems were encountered. These were concerned with the sampling of lessons across the curriculum, and the reactions of the practical grade class and their standard ten guidance teacher at Ridgemount.

While every effort was made to sample an adequate number of lessons across the curriculum in each of the three years, this was not easy to achieve in the final year of this study. The syllabuses in all four classes were completed by the first quarter, and a programme of revision then commenced. As a result, it was difficult to observe any new lessons.

There were times when the practical grade class at Ridgemount reacted negatively to me. On more than one occasion they urged the teacher to put off guidance lessons so that they could use the lesson period to study for tests and examinations. Guidance was a non-examination subject and was therefore perceived to be unimportant. Since my visits to this class coincided frequently with these lessons, the students felt that I was unsympathetic to their needs. This situation was made even more difficult when in the last year of this study a new untrained guidance teacher was allocated to this class. She seemed to be very uneasy in my presence, and she also sensed that some members of the class were resisting me. She tried to discourage my visits by saying that the students were inhibited by my presence.

"The students feel awkward when you are here, and that's what holds them back. Without you, they feel freer and nicer. They say they've been hounded for so long and they like some freedom ... Initially, your presence in my lessons bothered me. I'm quite a new teacher, and the very fact that there is someone else around puts me on the edge. But what made me so conscious was the class being so conscious of you. You used to inhibit our discussions at times. They never wanted to open up, and to an extent it spoilt the lesson. And at times when you were not there, and if the topic was interesting, I got far better response."

Some students, however, did point out that they were concerned that I always carried a tape recorder, and it was possible that I could be "passing on information to the principal." A spokesman for the class assured me that only a few students felt uneasy about my presence, and that the others were quite happy for me to continue with

my visits. Other students told me that the class took advantage of the guidance teacher because she was a female, unqualified and inexperienced. They felt that these were the reasons for her uneasiness in my presence. To put the teacher at ease, I asked the guidance counsellor to explain to her that I had no intention of assessing her teaching ability. This helped to relieve the tension during future visits.

Despite these few problems, I got much support and encouragement from several teachers and students in both schools. They were keenly interested and kept questioning me about the purpose of the research, commented on the choice of the sample, and the research methodology which was used. Some of these views of the teachers are included in Appendix 2.

### 5.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

One of the major problems encountered in this section of the study was the vast amount of data that were collected and had to be analysed. Some irrelevant data had to be omitted. For example, guidance lessons did not deal only with careers, choice of courses and subjects. About forty per cent of these lessons, especially in the practical grade dealt with topics such as parent-child relationships, problems of teenagers, marriage, study habits, behaviour patterns, personality traits, and so on. Except for certain indirect references these lessons did not contribute in any great depth to an understanding of how the students' educational and career identities were shaped.

As far as the general lessons were concerned, the analysis pointed broadly to the classification, framing and evaluation of knowledge in particular classroom settings. There were also opportunities to study the various participants, and the formal and informal climate which existed in these classrooms. However, there was no attempt to analyse the specific concepts, methods and other aspects of particular subjects in the curriculum. This fell outside the scope of the present study.

During individual counselling sessions much data were collected on the administration and interpretation of interest tests, cumulative scholastic records, and advice on study techniques. Apart from providing a general picture of the counselling programme, this material was not useful for analysing educational and career pathways.

Similarly, data collected on parents' meetings included certain irrelevant information on things like the schools' extra mural activities, parental control of children, absenteeism, welfare and charity. Material from the talks of visiting speakers, which was omitted from the analysis, included that which dealt with the descriptions of institutions which they represented. Two of the speakers dealt with matters such as family relationships, preparation for marriage, and parent-child relationships. As in the case of guidance lessons, these matters were considered to be irrelevant for the purpose of analysis.

Data which were obtained from tape recordings and observational notes, and which were considered to be unsuitable for in-depth analysis, constituted approximately thirty-five per cent of the material. The remainder of the data were carefully examined, and a preliminary analysis of the content pointed to thirteen broad categories. These were topics which the students, teachers, counsellors, principals and others spoke about when discussing school experience. They appear as categories in tables 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8 (on pages 264 to 270).

The thirteen categories were coded and the profile of each student, tape-recorded transcriptions and observational notes of guidance lessons, general lessons, parents' meetings, films, and talks given by visiting speakers were scrutinised to see which categories were contained in them. The procedure for tallying the frequencies or the number of occurrences with which each category appeared in the entire range of content that was analysed is similar to that adopted in the analysis of the family (Chapter Four). However, separate sets of tables were constructed for students and teachers. This arrangement was necessary because of the vast amount of data collected on lessons, films, visiting speakers, parents' meetings, and interviews and discussions with teachers; not all of which could be indexed for each student. These data had to be arranged and filed under a broad heading which deals with teachers. For this purpose, teachers refer to subject teachers, guidance teachers, guidance counsellors, principals and visiting speakers.

Though disparate kinds of data were collected for the students and teachers, eventually a common set of categories was analysed for both of these groups. The use of this common set can be accounted for as follows:



- (a) Those categories which arose from irrelevant information concerning lessons in classrooms, individual counselling sessions, parents' meetings, and talks given by visiting speakers were not included in the analysis.
- (b) There were some categories which were common to both teachers and students, and these included: **"classification and framing of knowledge," "educational qualifications," "the 'mental' and the 'manual'," "racial separation," "gender," "social class," "guidance and counselling," and "attitudes to school and education."**
- (c) When teachers were interviewed they were questioned about some aspects of those categories which emerged from the data which were specifically applicable to students. For example, teachers were asked for their opinions and views about: students' **"school performance,"** reasons for **"early school leaving," "educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades," "career aspirations"** of the students, and the **"students' informal culture."**

These approaches to the arrangement of the data resulted eventually in a common set of categories.

References to particular categories were indicated by statements made by the students, the teachers referred to above, and through observational notes. The frequencies were tallied for each category of content that was analysed. Thereafter, the percentage of the total content which each category constituted was calculated. The content was analysed in this way for: the entire group of school-leavers; the total sample of teachers; school-leavers from each of the two schools; teachers from each of the two schools; and for the tertiary education group. The content was not analysed separately for the teachers of the tertiary education group since the analysis is the same as that for the teachers of the ordinary grade. Students from the tertiary education group were in the ordinary grade classes.

Some of the categories which presented problems during analysis were: classification and framing of knowledge, students' career aspirations, attitudes to school and education, and social class. There were statements which fitted into more than one category. For example, when students referred to their choices

of subjects and courses, this could be interpreted as belonging to **"career aspirations"**, as well as to the **"classification and framing of knowledge."** Similarly when references were made to **"mental"** and **"manual"** occupations, or to reasons for **"early school leaving,"** these could easily have fitted into the category of **"social class."** References to the desire for **"educational qualifications"** often overlapped with **"attitudes to school and education,"** and **"career aspirations."**

In these instances, each reference was carefully examined for its central idea which was taken to be its main concern. It was then placed in its appropriate category. In addition, if it contained general statements about other related categories, such references were then placed in the other categories. For example, a specific or main reference to **"educational qualifications"** was recorded under that category, and if the statement also contained general references to **"career aspirations"** and **"attitudes to school and education,"** additional frequencies were noted in the latter categories.

However, these various related categories were not seen in isolation. They were linked in the minds of the students in various ways, and the analysis points to the relationships reflected in their views about school, jobs, desire for mobility, and opportunities in the wider society. Such linkages enable us to understand how the students constructed their identities under different social conditions.

The tables which follow present the content of categories which were analysed separately for students and teachers. This has been done for the total sample, and for each of the two schools.



TABLE 5.2

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE									ORDINARY GRADE									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. School performance	17	13.28	9	10	12.05	7	27	12.80	16	10	14.93	5	10	16.39	4	20	15.63	9	27	13.85	14	20	13.89	11	47	13.86	25
2. Early school leaving	14	10.94	5	10	12.05	5	24	11.37	10	3	4.48	2	5	8.20	1	8	6.25	3	17	8.72	7	15	10.42	6	32	9.44	13
3. Educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades	9	7.03	4	6	7.23	2	15	7.11	6	1	1.49	1	2	3.28	2	3	2.34	3	10	5.13	5	8	5.56	4	18	5.31	9
4. Classification and framing of knowledge	12	9.38	6	6	7.23	4	18	8.53	10	8	11.94	3	6	9.84	3	14	10.94	6	20	10.26	9	12	8.33	7	32	9.44	16
5. Educational qualifications	12	9.38	6	4	4.82	2	16	7.58	8	3	4.48	2	5	8.20	4	8	6.25	6	15	7.69	8	9	6.25	6	24	7.08	14
6. The "mental" and the "manual"	11	8.59	5	5	6.02	3	16	7.58	8	8	11.94	4	6	9.84	4	14	10.94	8	19	9.74	9	11	7.64	7	30	8.85	16
7. Racial separation	0	0.0	0	2	2.41	2	2	0.95	2	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	2	1.39	2	2	0.59	2
8. Gender	3	2.34	2	9	10.84	5	12	5.69	7	0	0.0	0	5	8.20	4	5	3.91	4	3	1.54	2	14	9.72	9	17	5.01	11
9. Social class	2	1.56	2	1	1.20	1	3	1.42	3	5	7.46	4	3	4.92	2	8	6.25	6	7	3.59	6	4	2.78	3	11	3.24	9
10. Guidance and counselling	4	3.13	4	4	4.82	3	8	3.79	7	3	4.48	3	3	4.92	3	6	4.69	6	7	3.59	7	7	4.86	6	14	4.13	13
11. Career aspirations	21	16.41	8	13	15.66	6	34	16.11	14	13	19.40	5	10	16.39	4	23	17.97	9	34	17.44	13	23	15.97	10	57	16.81	23
12. Attitudes to school and education	16	12.50	9	10	12.05	6	26	12.32	15	11	16.42	5	5	8.20	3	16	12.50	8	27	13.85	14	15	10.42	9	42	12.39	23
13. Students' informal culture	7	5.47	4	3	3.61	3	10	4.74	7	2	2.99	2	1	1.64	1	3	2.34	3	9	4.62	6	4	2.78	4	13	3.83	10

TABLE 5.3

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE FOR  
TOTAL SAMPLE OF TEACHERS

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE			ORDINARY GRADE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. School performance	33	12.41	20	23	9.79	10	56	11.18	30
2. Early school leaving	8	3.01	6	4	1.70	3	12	2.40	9
3. Educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades	15	5.64	8	18	7.66	4	33	6.59	12
4. Classification and framing of knowledge	19	7.14	7	19	8.09	8	38	7.58	15
5. Educational qualifications	22	8.27	5	30	12.77	5	52	10.38	10
6. The "mental" and the "manual"	33	12.41	8	28	11.91	6	61	12.18	14
7. Racial separation	6	2.26	4	12	5.11	5	18	3.59	9
8. Gender	28	10.53	12	14	5.96	8	42	8.38	20
9. Social class	21	7.89	14	16	6.81	10	37	7.39	24
10. Guidance and counselling	26	9.77	10	24	10.21	7	50	9.98	17
11. Career aspirations	24	9.02	8	19	8.09	8	43	8.58	16
12. Attitudes to school and education	24	9.02	13	25	10.64	14	49	9.78	27
13. Students' informal culture	7	2.63	3	3	1.28	1	10	2.0	4

TABLE 5.4

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT ORCHARD LANE

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE									ORDINARY GRADE									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. School performance	9	12.86	6	6	11.76	3	15	12.40	9	7	14.00	3	10	16.39	4	17	15.32	7	16	13.33	9	16	14.29	7	32	13.79	16
2. Early school leaving	14	20.00	5	3	5.88	1	17	14.01	6	2	4.00	1	5	8.20	1	7	6.31	2	16	13.33	6	8	7.14	2	24	10.34	8
3. Educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades	3	4.29	1	6	11.76	2	9	7.44	3	1	2.00	1	2	3.28	2	3	2.70	3	4	3.33	2	8	7.14	4	12	5.17	6
4. Classification and framing of knowledge	6	8.57	3	4	7.84	2	10	8.26	5	6	12.00	2	6	9.84	3	12	10.81	5	12	10.00	5	10	8.93	5	22	9.48	10
5. Educational qualifications	6	8.57	3	2	3.92	1	8	6.61	4	3	6.00	2	5	8.20	4	8	7.21	6	9	7.50	5	7	6.25	5	16	6.90	10
6. The "mental" and the "manual"	4	5.71	2	4	7.84	2	8	6.61	4	7	14.00	3	6	9.84	4	13	11.71	7	11	9.17	5	10	8.93	6	21	9.05	11
7. Racial separation	0	0.0	0	1	1.96	1	1	0.83	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	1	0.89	1	1	0.43	1
8. Gender	1	1.43	1	7	13.73	3	8	6.61	4	0	0.0	0	5	8.20	4	5	4.50	4	1	0.83	1	12	10.71	7	13	5.60	8
9. Social class	2	2.86	2	0	0.0	0	2	1.65	2	3	6.00	2	3	4.92	2	6	5.41	4	5	4.17	4	3	2.68	2	8	3.45	6
10. Guidance and counselling	2	2.86	2	2	3.92	1	4	3.31	3	2	4.00	2	3	4.92	3	5	4.50	5	4	3.33	4	5	4.46	4	9	3.88	8
11. Career aspirations	11	15.71	5	9	17.65	3	20	16.53	8	10	20.00	3	10	16.39	4	20	18.02	7	21	17.50	8	19	16.96	7	40	17.24	15
12. Attitudes to school and education	10	14.29	6	6	11.76	3	16	13.22	9	8	16.00	3	5	8.20	3	13	11.71	6	18	15.00	9	11	9.82	6	29	12.50	15
13. Students' informal culture	2	2.86	1	1	1.96	1	3	2.48	2	1	2.00	1	1	1.64	1	2	1.80	2	3	2.50	2	2	1.79	2	5	2.16	4

TABLE 5.5  
CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE FOR  
TEACHERS AT ORCHARD LANE

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE			ORDINARY GRADE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. School performance	18	12.0	12	19	15.83	5	37	13.70	17
2. Early school leaving	5	3.33	4	4	3.33	3	9	3.33	7
3. Educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades	6	4.0	4	6	5.0	2	12	4.44	6
4. Classification and framing of knowledge	10	6.67	4	7	5.83	3	17	6.30	7
5. Educational qualifications	17	11.33	3	16	13.33	2	33	12.22	5
6. The "mental" and the "manual"	24	16.0	5	14	11.67	3	38	14.07	8
7. Racial separation	4	2.67	2	2	1.67	1	6	2.22	3
8. Gender	18	12.0	8	7	5.83	4	25	9.26	12
9. Social class	8	5.33	5	5	4.17	5	13	4.81	10
10. Guidance and counselling	15	10.0	6	13	10.83	4	28	10.37	10
11. Career aspirations	13	8.67	4	10	8.33	4	23	8.52	8
12. Attitudes to school and education	10	6.67	6	14	11.67	7	24	8.89	13
13. Students' informal culture	2	1.33	1	3	2.50	1	5	1.85	2

TABLE 5.6

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT RIDGEMOUNT

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE									ORDINARY GRADE									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. School performance	8	13.79	3	4	12.50	4	12	13.33	7	3	17.65	2	0	0.0	0	3	17.65	2	11	14.67	5	4	12.50	4	15	14.02	9
2. Early school leaving	0	0.0	0	7	21.88	4	7	7.78	4	1	5.88	1	0	0.0	0	1	5.88	1	1	1.33	1	7	21.88	4	8	7.48	5
3. Educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades	6	10.34	3	0	0.0	0	6	6.67	3	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	6	8.00	3	0	0.0	0	6	5.61	3
4. Classification and framing of knowledge	6	10.34	3	2	6.25	2	8	8.89	5	2	11.76	1	0	0.0	0	2	11.76	1	8	10.67	4	2	6.25	2	10	9.35	6
5. Educational qualifications	6	10.34	3	2	6.25	1	8	8.89	4	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	6	8.00	3	2	6.25	1	8	7.48	4
6. The "mental" and the "manual"	7	12.07	3	1	3.13	1	8	8.89	4	1	5.88	1	0	0.0	0	1	5.88	1	8	10.67	4	1	3.13	1	9	8.41	5
7. Racial separation	0	0.0	0	1	3.13	1	1	1.11	1	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	1	3.13	1	1	0.93	1
8. Gender	2	3.45	1	2	6.25	2	4	4.44	3	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	2	2.67	1	2	6.25	2	4	3.74	3
9. Social class	0	0.0	0	1	3.13	1	1	1.11	1	2	11.76	2	0	0.0	0	2	11.76	2	2	2.67	2	1	3.13	1	3	2.80	3
10. Guidance and counselling	2	3.45	2	2	6.25	2	4	4.44	4	1	5.88	1	0	0.0	0	1	5.88	1	3	4.00	3	2	6.25	2	5	4.67	5
11. Career aspirations	10	17.24	3	4	12.50	3	14	15.56	6	3	17.65	2	0	0.0	0	3	17.65	2	13	17.33	5	4	12.50	3	17	15.89	8
12. Attitudes to school and education	6	10.34	3	4	12.50	3	10	11.11	6	3	17.65	2	0	0.0	0	3	17.65	2	9	12.00	5	4	12.50	3	13	12.15	8
13. Students' informal culture	5	8.62	3	2	6.25	2	7	7.78	5	1	5.88	1	0	0.0	0	1	5.88	1	6	8.00	4	2	6.25	2	8	7.48	6

TABLE 5.7

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE FOR  
TEACHERS AT RIDGEMOUNT

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE			ORDINARY GRADE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. School performance	15	12.93	8	4	3.48	5	19	8.23	13
2. Early school leaving	3	2.59	2	0	0.0	0	3	1.30	2
3. Educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades	9	7.76	4	12	10.43	2	21	9.09	6
4. Classification and framing of knowledge	9	7.76	3	12	10.43	5	21	9.09	8
5. Educational qualifica- tions	5	4.31	2	14	12.17	3	19	8.23	5
6. The "mental" and the "manual"	9	7.76	3	14	12.17	3	23	9.96	6
7. Racial separation	2	1.72	2	10	8.70	4	12	5.19	6
8. Gender	10	8.62	4	7	6.09	4	17	7.36	8
9. Social class	13	11.21	9	11	9.57	5	24	10.39	14
10. Guidance and counselling	11	9.48	4	11	9.57	3	22	9.52	7
11. Career aspirations	11	9.48	4	9	7.83	4	20	8.66	8
12. Attitudes to school and education	14	12.07	7	11	9.57	7	25	10.82	14
13. Students' informal culture	5	4.31	2	0	0.0	0	5	2.16	2

TABLE 5.8

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE TERTIARY EDUCATION GROUP

AT ORCHARD LANE AND RIDGEMOUNT

CONTENT CATEGORIES	ORCHARD LANE									RIDGEMOUNT									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. School performance	8	14.81	4	4	20.00	1	12	16.22	5	6	17.14	2	12	14.29	5	18	15.13	7	14	15.73	6	16	15.38	6	30	15.54	12
2. Early school leaving	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0
3. Educational provisions for ordinary and practical grades	2	3.70	1	3	15.00	1	5	6.76	2	2	5.71	2	6	7.14	4	8	6.72	6	4	4.49	3	9	8.65	5	13	6.74	8
4. Classification and framing of knowledge	4	7.41	3	2	10.00	1	6	8.11	4	3	8.57	2	5	5.95	4	8	6.72	6	7	7.87	5	7	6.73	5	14	7.25	10
5. Educational qualifications	6	11.11	3	3	15.00	1	9	12.16	4	2	5.71	2	8	9.52	4	10	8.40	6	8	8.99	5	11	10.58	5	19	9.84	10
6. The "mental" and the "manual"	7	12.96	4	1	5.00	1	8	10.81	5	3	8.57	3	9	10.71	4	12	10.08	7	10	11.24	7	10	9.62	5	20	10.36	12
7. Racial separation	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	5	14.29	1	1	1.19	1	6	5.04	2	5	5.62	1	1	0.96	1	6	3.11	2
8. Gender	0	0.0	0	2	10.00	1	2	2.70	1	0	0.0	0	9	10.71	4	9	7.56	4	0	0.0	0	11	10.58	5	11	5.70	5
9. Social class	4	7.41	3	0	0.0	0	4	5.41	3	3	8.57	1	4	4.76	3	7	5.88	4	7	7.87	4	4	3.85	3	11	5.70	7
10. Guidance and counselling	6	11.11	4	1	5.00	1	7	9.46	5	2	5.71	2	8	9.52	5	10	8.40	7	8	8.99	6	9	8.65	6	17	8.81	12
11. Career aspirations	8	14.81	4	2	10.00	1	10	13.51	5	5	14.29	2	10	11.90	5	15	12.61	7	13	14.61	6	12	11.54	6	25	12.95	12
12. Attitudes to school and education	9	16.67	4	2	10.00	1	11	14.86	5	4	11.43	2	8	9.52	5	12	10.08	7	13	14.61	6	10	9.62	6	23	11.92	12
13. Students' informal culture	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0	4	4.76	3	4	3.36	3	0	0.0	0	4	3.85	3	4	2.07	3



### 5.3.1 Controls over the Data

Data obtained from one source had to be compared with those obtained from other sources to check for validity and reliability. For example, information obtained from guidance lessons, individual counselling sessions, and parents' meetings were compared regularly. The comparisons revealed certain consistencies, as well as inconsistencies which had to be examined in greater depth.

Data which appeared to be consistent included the students' school performances, reasons for early school leaving, and educational provisions for the two grades of students. Teachers of different subjects provided similar information about the performances of individual students in their classes. These consistencies in turn were confirmed by the students themselves during discussions and interviews, as well as through information obtained from their cumulative record cards. I also kept track of the examination performance of each student during his stay at school for the period of this study. This was an important aspect of the profile constructed for each student.

The reasons for early school leaving mentioned by the school-leavers were similar to those mentioned by their parents during home visits. The counsellors' information about this also tallied with what the students had said. The allocation of teachers, the subjects and courses, the testing and evaluation programmes in the two grades were some of the aspects of **"educational provisions"** that were mentioned frequently by the practical grade school-leavers. It was important to establish whether these statements were correct, and to find out why this situation existed in the two schools. Questions on these matters were therefore included in the interviews and discussions held with the principals and the counsellors in both schools. Their responses, as well as my observations in the schools, suggested that much of what was previously reported by the practical grade school-leavers was accurate.

There was also much consistency in the data concerning the school-leavers' remarks about the **"repetitive"**, **"boring"** and **"uninteresting"** subject matter in the practical grade syllabuses. This was established not only by matching the statements of various school-leavers, but also by examining the many references

which the subject teachers made about this aspect of the classification of knowledge. My own observations of different lessons in these classes also confirmed what the school-leavers and the teachers had said.

The career preferences mentioned by the school-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group, did not reveal many inconsistencies. For example, if a student mentioned a career preference during an individual counselling session, this was usually repeated when he was interviewed with his friendship group, and sometimes even during guidance lessons. In some cases, such career preferences were also mentioned in their written accounts in careers-guidance exercise books. When they changed their preferences, they were asked why they had done so. The reasons which they gave were consistent from one interview to another.

Data which appeared to be conflicting, and had to be clarified through in-depth probing were those related to **"attitudes to school and education," "educational qualifications,"** and **"guidance and counselling."** On some occasions, students as well as certain teachers and counsellors in both schools seemed to express contradictory views on these matters. This was apparent from teachers' and students' comments, as well as from my observations of the students' behaviour in and out of the classroom.

There were times when some students did not show much interest in their schoolwork, judging by their mediocre performance, failure to submit homework on time, poor behaviour in class, and irregular attendance. Yet, at other times they spoke of their determination to succeed in school because they believed that education was crucial for obtaining good jobs. There were nine such students from both grades. There were also some teachers who sometimes spoke positively of these students, and negatively at other times. Some students spoke approvingly about the importance of educational qualifications and the value of guidance lessons for acquiring jobs. At other times, they seemed to be hesitant, and even expressed opposite points of view, especially when they spoke about having the **"right contacts."**

There was also much uncertainty about the reasons given for the early school leaving of Shireen from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane, Logan from the practical grade at Orchard

Lane, and Sundrie from the practical grade at Ridgemount. Their parents', teachers', friends', and these school leavers' accounts of the reasons for leaving school differed widely. For example, Shireen said that she had to leave school because she **"suffered from constant headaches, and it was a long and strenuous walk to school."** However, her parents seemed hesitant when I questioned them about this. Nor was it clear whether she had left school to seek employment. Her friends and some of her teachers said that she spoke to them about getting a job in the firm where her father was employed.

Sundrie was reluctant to disclose the real reason why she left school. I tried to find out about this from her friends and teachers, but they were unsure. However, her father explained that she had to leave because she did not **"behave properly."** Logan was evasive, and his friends did not seem to know why he left school in standard eight.

In order to judge the reliability of such conflicting and contradictory evidence, I questioned the students and their teachers on these matters in the focussed interviews which were conducted at various stages. Such questions were asked repeatedly, being framed in different ways. Where there were glaring contradictions, these were pointed out to the students and they were asked why they had contradicted themselves. The group interviews were particularly useful to check on such data since one student's view could always be presented for comment by other members of the group. This was not possible in situations where individuals were interviewed alone, as the sources of such counter evidence were not so readily available.

Two students whose views had to be checked regularly were Logan, and Ahmed from the tertiary education group at Ridgemount. Logan tried to conceal information from me, and Ahmed wanted to impress me by often changing his preferences for many different status-orientated careers. He was very conscious of the middle-class status of his family. The teachers at both schools warned me about the **"fronts"** which these students presented, and in such cases it was often necessary to check their statements with those which they had made in other related contexts; and also to ask their friends and their teachers to comment on these statements.

#### 5.4 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

This category accounted for 13.86 per cent of the total content of material that was analysed for all school-leavers, and 15.54 per cent for students from the tertiary education group. It also comprised 11.18 per cent of the content analysed for all teachers. Data in respect of this category were kept for every student who participated in the study. The general picture of the ability range and performances of the students in the sample already presented in Chapter Two of Part Two indicated that the majority of the lower-working-class school-leavers in both schools were average performers. The upper working class consisted of almost equal numbers of average and good students, while the three lower-middle-class school-leavers were all regarded as good.

School-leavers who were of average ability, and whose performances were poor included such students as Juggie, Perumal and Jaylal from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane. Some examples of those of good ability who had also performed well were Saras from the ordinary grade and Nesan from the practical grade at Orchard Lane; Kesval from the ordinary grade, and David from the practical grade at Ridgemount.

Brief descriptions of the examination performances of some of these school-leavers illustrate their positions. Juggie obtained 47 per cent in standard eight and a condoned pass of 36 per cent in standard nine. He failed four subjects. Perumal obtained 42 per cent in standard eight, 40 per cent in standard nine, and just managed to pass in standard ten, taking all subjects on the standard grade. Jaylal passed standard eight with 42 per cent, and got a condoned pass in standard nine, obtaining 33 per cent. Though he took all subjects on the standard grade, he failed the matriculation examination.

Of those who performed well, Saras obtained 66 per cent in standard eight, 69 per cent in standard ten, and a Matriculation Exemption Certificate with an A symbol in typing. Kesval passed standard eight with 58 per cent, and standard nine with 42 per cent. He also obtained a Matriculation Exemption Certificate with an A in mathematics on the standard grade, a C in physical science on the standard grade, and a C in accountancy on the higher grade. David obtained 63 per cent in standard eight,



60 per cent in standard nine, and passed standard ten practical grade with a B symbol in mathematics, and Cs in the other subjects.

The teachers' comments about these and other school-leavers indicated something about their performances. For example, this is what some of Jaylal's teachers felt about him.

Standard ten mathematics teacher : "He is definitely not doing his work. He has failed all his tests. This is because of his attitude towards his work. I think he is definitely copying his work from other students."

Standard ten English teacher : "This student hasn't been working hard. He tells me that he has hardly any time at home to study, because almost every day he helps his father to repair his truck. I don't know if this is true, or if he is looking for excuses."

Standard nine accountancy teacher : "One minute he does his work, and the next minute he is lost. I think this is so because he's on drugs, like dagga. He also lives away from his parents. He lives with his grandfather who doesn't seem to have control over him. I think he is too free."

The standard eight, practical grade geography teacher at Orchard Lane made the following remarks about Kalavathees:

"She seems to sleep for much of the time. She never seems to be fully alert. She is not like the others. She hasn't got that competitive spirit in her. She always performs at a low level."

Sheila from the practical grade at Ridgemount, and Nesan were among those of whom teachers thought highly. This can be seen in the following extracts.

Standard eight science teacher : "Sheila had the potential for good results. I don't know why she left school. She was a good worker."

Standard eight guidance counsellor : "In standard seven, Sheila was an outstanding student of English. She had to leave school. But she was a very good pupil."

Standard ten English teacher : "Nesan is very interested in his work. He also works very hard. He is one of the top four students in my subject. He could have managed this subject on the standard grade."

Nearly all the students from the tertiary education group performed well in their examinations, and generally their teachers spoke about the subjects in which they had done well, so that they would be able to gain admission to university or college.

#### 5.5 EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

Thirteen school-leavers discussed their reasons for early school leaving, and this constituted 9.44 per cent of the content analysed for the entire sample. It made up 11.37 per cent of the material analysed for practical grade school-leavers, as against 6.25 per cent for those from the ordinary grade. As far as the two schools are concerned, this category accounted for 10.34 per cent for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, as against 7.48 per cent for those from Ridgemount. This category also accounted for 2.40 per cent of the content analysed for the total sample of teachers.

Many of the practical grade students left school early because of financial problems, domestic problems, pressure from family members and the sudden availability of jobs. In particular, several working-class school-leavers discussed these reasons, thus confirming what their parents had said to me during the home visits. This can be seen from the comments of Juggie, and Sagren (ordinary grade, Ridgemount) which appear below.

Juggie : "My father's brother who lives with us wants us to give him his share of the house. He is a drunkard, and he often fights over this. My eldest brother's and dad's earnings won't be enough to pay him off. If I go to work it may help. My father spoke to me about this. But I don't want to leave school. I will miss my friends at school."

Sagren : "My father asked me to leave school and look for a job. He needed financial assistance since my elder brother who got recently married has left home to live elsewhere. He does not give any money to my parents now."

Juggie's standard nine English teacher offered an idea of why he had to leave school, and how the anticipation of leaving affected his performance in school. The teacher said:

"I think he is allowing his personal problems to creep into his schoolwork. His father has asked him to leave school. So he feels probably there is no point in working very hard when he knows that he is not going to go into the matric class."

Students such as Prakash from the practical grade at Orchard Lane, Logan and Moonsamy (practical grade, Orchard Lane) were glad to leave school to take up jobs which came up earlier than expected. They felt that this would give them more experience in work than if they were to complete standard ten and then look for jobs. For example, Moonsamy said:

**"I'll be one year ahead if I start work at the end of standard nine. This will give me one more year experience, and I will be earning money one year earlier."**

Kalavathee's account of why she was forced to leave school at the beginning of standard ten, gives some account of the influence of the family. She said:

**"My dad is very ill, and my uncle says that I must leave school. He says that I must get married. I think my father wants me to get married before he dies. I am very annoyed because I feel that my family is putting pressure on me to leave school."**

However, her father died before she could get married. The wedding was postponed, and she returned to school to complete standard ten.

Those who left school in standards eight and nine were made up almost exclusively of working-class students, and were from the practical grade. The majority were from the lower working-class. Even those who left at the end of standard ten were mainly working-class. It is also interesting to note that almost half the number of the students from this social-class group consisted of girls. Of the eleven female school-leavers, seven completed standard ten. Six of these were from the working class. These girls were almost evenly distributed between the practical and ordinary grades.

There was a distinct difference in the drop-out rates between the two grades of students. The rate was very high in the practical grade, but it was almost non-existent in the ordinary grade. By the time the practical grade students reached standard ten, about two-thirds of this group had left school, while the ordinary grade classes were almost intact.



## 5.6 EDUCATIONAL PROVISIONS FOR PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES

About one third of the school-leavers referred to this aspect of their experience in school. This category also accounted for 5.31 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers; 5.17 per cent for those from Orchard Lane, and 5.61 per cent for those from Ridgemount. Members of the tertiary education group also discussed this aspect of school, and this category constituted 6.74 per cent of the total content analysed for members of this group. This category comprised 6.59 per cent of the content analysed for the total sample of teachers.

The ways in which policies were translated into practice in the schools indicated that the institutional organisation of schooling was an important factor in cultural reproduction. This was especially noticeable in the differential nature of the provisions for the ordinary grade (mainly middle class) and the practical grade (mainly working class). The inequalities in educational provision were reproduced within the school by the streaming system.

By the beginning of 1983, the Education Department decided to phase out the practical grade. However, the students in this study who were in standard ten at that stage were not affected by this decision. They were allowed to complete their schooling in the ordinary and practical grades. Other students who were in standards eight and nine were required to take the various subjects on the higher, standard and lower grade levels.

The educational provision in both schools was one of sponsorship for the ordinary grade. This was clearly noticeable as far as the student-teacher ratio was concerned. The ordinary grade ratio was about 30:1, while the practical grade ratio was 40:1. The ordinary grade in both schools was also subdivided into small groups for tuition in subjects like mathematics, physical science, and English. These were considered to be crucial subjects for entrance to tertiary education institutions. No such provisions were made for the practical grade. In addition, the standard ten ordinary grade at Ridgemount was given the most experienced teachers in the school. The principal's explanation was:

"I try not to put an inexperienced teacher into a standard ten ordinary grade. There is a need for very in-depth and intensive study in the ordinary grade, but not so with the practical grade. With the latter, 50 per cent of their final examination is made up of their year marks. The type of testing programme is such that we can afford placing inexperienced teachers there. They can make adjustments as they go along."

Some practical grade students commented on the lack of provision and opportunities for this group. For example, Pat from Ridgemount said:

"Some ordinary grade students think that they are superior, but we are all the same. It's just that some of us slipped, and got into the practical grade. In school, we don't get the same opportunities as those in the ordinary grade. They are provided with most of the things which are asked for. But the same things are not readily given to us."

While many practical grade students identified with the academic aims of the school, they resented the policies of the school towards them. Firstly, they felt that being in the practical grade did not offer them a fair chance of "getting ahead." They regarded this grade as inferior, and this feeling is clearly brought out in Moonsamy's comments:

"Being in the practical grade won't be of any benefit to me. Even if I do my matric, I will get the same type of work as with a standard nine pass. We are also unhappy that the practical grade is much lower than the ordinary grade. The teachers used to say this."

They were also deeply critical of the fact that educational visits were arranged more often for the ordinary grade, and that parents' meetings were arranged only for the ordinary grade. This is illustrated in the views of Savy (Orchard Lane), and Nesan.

Savy : "The school does not take the practical grade on trips because they think that we are low. They think that we do not understand what they show us, but they don't know how much we know. Even the ordinary grade don't understand some of the things that we know. When the teachers want our help for anything, we refuse and remind them of the trips. They tell us that since we are doing things in the lower standard, they could not take us; that the ordinary grade will gain more."

Nesan : "I think the school is very unfair. We are also in matric, just like the ordinary grade. All students should be treated alike. All parents would like to know about their children's progress. I feel it's very unfair for the staff not to call our parents. Also, when the school has a debate or speech contest, we are not invited to attend. If they allowed us, we can improve our knowledge as well."

During a guidance lesson in standard ten, practical grade at Ridgemount, one of the students said that the bad behaviour of the students in this class was owing to the school's discriminatory policies.

"This school has parents' meetings, but our parents are not invited. Surely, they would also like to meet our teachers and discuss our progress with them. The parents of the ordinary grade students are invited because they have lots of money. If we mention this to the principal or teachers we will be victimised."

By contrast, students from the tertiary education group hardly commented on the unequal provisions between the two grades. Their main concern was with the availability or non-availability of specific courses and subjects which affected their entry into university, technikon and college. In a few instances, they were disappointed because the schools did not offer courses in commerce and science for which too few students had opted.

As far as school excursions and visits were concerned, priority was given to the **"academic needs"** of the ordinary grade. For example, Orchard Lane took their ordinary grade students to the Department of Engineering of the University of Durban-Westville; while Ridgemount arranged for their students to visit the Departments of Architecture, Quantity Surveying, Engineering, Physical Science and Chemistry at the University of Natal. These students also attended a symposium on careers where university lecturers, medical practitioners, nurses, speech and hearing therapists, chartered accountants and other professionals spoke on careers in their respective fields. Both schools also organised visits for ordinary grade students to M.L. Sultan's School of Secretarial, Commercial and Language Studies.

On the other hand, the practical grade students were taken on visits of a **"less serious nature."** Such visits included a housecraft display, furniture, woodwork and metalwork exhibitions for Orchard Lane students. The Ridgemount students were

taken to Richards Bay to visit some of the newly-built factories in this industrial complex. It was hoped that these students would get some idea of the range of occupations which they might enter once they left school.

Ordinary grade students were also favoured when it came to the provision of extra tuition in preparation for the final matriculation examination. This was given only to the ordinary grade, and was conducted during the winter vacation, weekends and before and after school hours. When asked why the practical grade was excluded, the guidance counsellor at Ridgemount said:

"Winter classes are not provided for practical grade students because they've been performing well. Besides, they can't go to university, training college, and no other tertiary education institution will accept them. They are going to slot into the world of work. But the ordinary grade students are writing many subjects on the higher grade, and they are potential candidates for the college of education and university. One needs to push them along. This practice is widespread in every school. We want to get some of our best students in the top ten in the country. We want to produce good exam results. It has something to do with the prestige of the school."

As far as parents' meetings were concerned, once again no provision was made for the practical grade. Several teachers argued that it was not necessary to meet the parents of these students since they were coping quite well with the "watered down" curriculum provided for them. The principal of Orchard Lane supported this decision as follows:

"We don't have such meetings for the parents of the practical grade because we know that after standard eight, the drop-out rate is going to increase and these students will get into blue-collar jobs. They cannot become professionals. There aren't many subject sets from which they can choose. So there is no need to meet their parents."

In addition, the guidance counsellor at this school said:

"No meetings are arranged for parents of practical grade pupils because one can't predict what the employment possibilities are for them. Most of their jobs arise through chance. If the parents want, they can come along and see me."

The principal and the guidance counsellor at Ridgemount felt that since practical grade students "performed well", and were suited to a less demanding curriculum it was not necessary to meet their



parents. The following extracts reflect this view.

Principal : "We do not have parents' meetings for the practical grade students because we do not find any problem areas in terms of performance. If you look at our exam results, you will notice that these students have 98 per cent passes."

Counsellor : "No meetings have been arranged for the parents of the practical grade students. The principal seems to feel that we are not having any major problems with them. Their pass requirements are being met over the years. On that basis we arrange meetings only for the ordinary grade."

#### 5.7 CLASSIFICATION AND FRAMING OF KNOWLEDGE

Most of the school-leavers, and students from the tertiary education group discussed how the classification and framing of knowledge in the curriculum affected the choices of subjects and courses. This category accounted for 9.44 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers, and 7.25 per cent for students from the tertiary education group. It also made up 7.58 per cent of the content analysed for all teachers; and 6.30 per cent for teachers from Orchard Lane, as against 9.09 per cent for teachers from Ridgemount.

The arrangement of subjects for the two grades, the pedagogical styles and certain aspects of the hidden curriculum revealed a great deal about the selection, stratification and organisation of knowledge. The principals and teachers in both schools regarded the ordinary grade curriculum as of a much higher level than that of the practical grade. The classification and framing of knowledge in both grades indicated the relationships between knowledge, power and the reproduction of the social order.

The underlying assumption was that practical knowledge will equip students from the practical grade for skilled and semi-skilled jobs; while abstract, theoretical knowledge will prepare ordinary grade students for jobs requiring high-level mental activities.

The distinction between the practical and ordinary grade curricula was seen mainly in terms of the future occupations and educational pathways that the students were likely to embark on. For example, the standard eight, practical grade woodwork teacher at Orchard Lane said:

"Most of the boys will enter trades like carpentry,

joinery and building. They don't want to be pen pushers, sitting behind desks. They want to do something practical."

The principal of Ridgemount expressed similar views:

"We help our practical grade and lower grade by giving them more commercially-orientated subjects, such as business economics, business methods, typing and accountancy. The majority of these pupils will enter the labour market."

Guidance counsellors also conveyed this message explicitly at parents' meetings. They stressed that, "there is virtually nothing that a practical grade student can do, except to go into the world of work." However, ordinary grade students could choose from various courses such as the sciences, humanities, general, technical and commercial, which would lead them to university, technikon, college or into work.

When the students chose their courses and subjects, they had some idea of where they were going. The choices were also affected by the way in which the subjects were arranged or grouped together in the curriculum. This can be seen from the accounts of the following students.

Saras : "I made the right choice by taking the G 57 course because it includes typing, maths and accountancy. These three subjects will help me if I wish to study for a course in computers. This will also be of use if I want to get into the business field later on."

Pat : "I took science and metalwork in standard eight, and I should have continued with this in standard nine. But since I was weak in metalwork I had to drop this subject. However, this meant that I couldn't also take science, since metalwork and science are grouped together. In any craftsmen's job today they want metalwork or science. This is why I wanted to take at least one these subjects."

The subject groupings also affected the decisions of students from the tertiary education group, but their main concern was that their choices should not unduly restrict the options that were available at college, technikon or university. Some of these students were also concerned that they had to do well in subjects like physical science and mathematics, even though these were difficult for them. They were very conscious of the importance of such subjects for entry into professions like medicine, engineering and pharmacy. For example, Selvi from Ridgemount said:

"In standard nine, I took all subjects on the higher grade, but in standard ten I had to take maths and physical science on the standard grade. My passes in standard nine in these subjects were not good enough to continue on the higher grade. However, I still need to do well in them on the standard grade since I will get a good chance to get into a teacher training course, for example. There is a need for science teachers."

The classification of knowledge also reflected differences in the choice of subjects between the sexes. The girls in the practical grade, in particular, opted for **"feminine"** subjects like housecraft and needlework, while the boys pursued the **"masculine"** interests of metalwork, woodwork and salesmanship. More girls than boys in the ordinary grade chose typing. The curriculum reflected and reproduced the sexual division of the home and the labour market. The curriculum was so organised that girls, for example, could not do both woodwork and housecraft.

Compared with the ordinary grade, the subject matter of the practical grade curriculum dealt with relatively simple things. It can be regarded as **"watered down,"** and several teachers stated that the practical grade curriculum in standard nine, for example, was at about the level of that of standard seven ordinary grade. The simplified nature of the curriculum can be gauged from the fact that in business methods these students were required to describe various kinds of equipment used at places of work. In mathematics they had to measure, calculate and construct angles, and memorise straightforward definitions of terms. In science they were taught to recognise certain measuring instruments. The head of department of mathematics at Ridgemount described the differences in the syllabuses of the two grades as follows:

"The standard six practical grade syllabus in maths says quite clearly that we should not go into depth when explaining concepts, and so on. We should focus on practical things. For example, problems should involve things like how to draw up a shopping list, how to budget, avoid overspending etc. This kind of practical maths is good because it prepares the child for life. However, if this child in the practical grade wants to switch to the ordinary grade, the new syllabus is very different, and he will find it difficult to cope. In the ordinary grade, maths requires deep thinking, dealing with involved concepts, and solving profound problems."



By contrast, ordinary grade students dealt with theoretical and abstract subject matter. In mathematics, they had to prove theorems and solve problems; in physical science they were required to deduce, apply knowledge and develop insights; in biology, highly technical and scientific terms were used; in English, when dealing with Shakespeare, poetry and novels, the teachers explained imagery, analysed characters, as well as main and sub-plots.

The following extracts from science lessons in the standard eight, practical grade class at Orchard Lane, and standard eight ordinary grade class at Ridgemount illustrate this "practical" - "academic" distinction according to which knowledge was classified.

Standard Eight, Practical Grade, Orchard Lane

Teacher : Which is the smaller unit, gram or kilogram?  
How many grams are there in one kilogram?  
Class : (in chorus) one thousand  
Teacher : Which is the smaller unit, milliamp or amp?  
Student : Milliamp  
Teacher : This is the amp meter. What does it measure?  
Student : It measures current

Standard Eight, Ordinary Grade, Ridgemount

Teacher : "By moving a conductor that does not have any current, we can induce a current in the conductor if we move it in the region of the magnetic field. Electric current induces a magnetic field, and a magnetic field induces an electric current, and this process is self-perpetuating. Once it has started, it carries on to infinity. And this is why we are able to transmit sound waves from space to earth; and light is able to reach us from the sun right down to the earth. All travel by means of electromagnetic waves."

Several teachers tried to justify the simplification of subject matter in the practical grade, by stating that it can be regarded as a preparation for jobs that these students will eventually do - in trades, commerce, and so on. For example, the standard eight practical grade English teacher at Ridgemount said:

"You can't compare them with an ordinary grade class. They are weak, but they respond if you play the lesson on their key. Generally, we use themes centred around business, commerce and so on. Compositions are orientated towards applying for jobs and filling in forms. We felt that this would be more useful than an academic approach. In the ordinary grade the students study set works for examination purposes."

Here, in the practical grade the set works are not examined. The books are also very simple."

The principal of Ridgemount said:

"As long as the practical grade students can communicate and make themselves understood, that is all that matters. This course is especially designed for those who do not have the potential for an academic course of study. It is mainly a question of developing the right skills. If the subjects are chosen correctly, these children will definitely find placements in job situations easily."

Nesan chose to transfer from the practical grade to the ordinary grade in standard eight. However, he could not cope with the work in this standard and had to return to the practical grade within the first two weeks. One of the main problems with which he was faced was the nature of the subject matter in the ordinary grade curriculum. This is evident in his comments below.

Nesan : "I thought that I would be able to manage ordinary grade work. But I felt maths and biology very difficult. Much of what was done here wasn't covered at all in the practical grade. I had no foundation, and I knew I couldn't cope."

Mayadevi's (practical grade, Orchard Lane), and Ruben's (practical grade, Ridgemount) comments also illustrate this point. They also referred to the classification and framing of knowledge in the two grades.

Mayadevi : "I have friends in the ordinary grade, and they tell me that their work is done in greater detail. I know that this is so in subjects like maths, geography and science. In the practical grade, we just have to take whatever is dished out to us."

Ruben : "The ordinary grade students go deeper into their subjects, and they are a long way ahead of us. We are in the practical grade, perhaps because we can't cope with the work on that level. Though, at first I didn't like the practical grade, but I soon got used to it. So I might as well carry on in this grade."

Closely associated with the way in which the knowledge was classified was its framing. This included the teaching styles, the testing programmes, and the allocation of time to various subjects in the two grades. Teachers generally felt that there was no need for in-depth, small group discussions in the practical grade. The ordinary grade students, on the other hand, must be made to "think and reason." They were encouraged to undertake independent research in several subjects. In both schools, ordinary grade students were put into smaller teaching groups

for English, mathematics and physical science. Individual attention was given. The following comments by teachers indicate the different approaches adopted in the two grades.

Standard nine, practical grade mathematics teacher, Orchard Lane:

"These students are generally weak. They have to know how to measure angles, calculate, and construct. In the ordinary grade, the work is more theoretical and abstract. Here we adopt a very practical approach. The standard nine practical grade syllabus involves things that are done with the standard seven ordinary grade. The gap is so wide that it is useless for a child to switch from the practical to the ordinary grade."

Standard eight, ordinary grade biology teacher, Ridgemount :

"I get these students to do independent work. I do very little formal teaching. I walk around the class checking if they are working on their own. In this way they build up their own concepts. Someone else cannot build up concepts for you. Concept building depends upon one's previous experience. These students are also encouraged to make their own set of notes."

The students in both grades were evaluated on different sets of criteria in tests and examinations. The questions in the ordinary grade examinations were very thought provoking, and the students were required to "examine data, information, and to pass judgments." The practical grade students had to answer "lower-level questions which demanded the recalling of basic factual information." The principal of Ridgemount justified this testing programme on the grounds that practical grade students do not have the ability to cope with challenging work. He said:

"The potential of these practical grade students is lower than those in the ordinary grade. They are unable to interpret questions which require much insight. They are able to recollect and reproduce facts more easily. In the exams and tests they are given the opportunity to merely recount facts, and use these facts and manipulate them up to a point. They are not expected to do any in-depth study. This will also apply to the new lower grade subjects which will be introduced soon. A child in the practical grade is invariably of a lower IQ, and in-depth study is not required. What is needed is a continuous assessment of skills. In the final examination, they are given simple, multiple-choice-type questions instead of essays."

In both schools, more time was devoted to academic subjects in the ordinary grade. The practical grade timetable was heavily geared towards "**practical**" subjects. For example, in standard ten ordinary grade, nine periods per week were allocated to English, while the practical grade had five. There were similar discrepancies in the time allocations in mathematics and science between the two grades. About fifty per cent of the time in the practical grade was devoted to subjects like metalwork.

#### 5.8 EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

More than half the number of school-leavers, and nearly every student from the tertiary education group, discussed the importance of educational qualifications. Teachers, counsellors, principals, and guest speakers also referred often to this matter. This category accounted for 7.08 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers; 7.58 per cent for school-leavers from the practical grade; and 6.25 per cent for those from the ordinary grade. It made up 9.84 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary education group. For the total sample of teachers, this category accounted for 10.38 per cent of the content that was analysed; 8.27 per cent for teachers of the practical grade, and 12.77 per cent for teachers of the ordinary grade.

It was quite clear that the main concern of both schools was to get their students to produce good examination results. They were encouraged to work hard, and were reminded of the importance of passing examinations. The principal of Ridgemount emphasised this aspect of his school's policy when he addressed the parents' meeting of the standard ten ordinary grade students. He said:

"In this school we cater for various activities, but priority number one is the curricular activity, and by that I mean the activity confined to the classroom situation. Sport is given a very important place, but not over the academic progress of your children ... And I want you, boys and girls to wear blinkers. The only thing that you must see in front of you are those books at most times. If you do that, and your results are good, you can end up at the medical school."

Closely associated with this was the stress on the importance of acquiring educational qualifications. Guidance counsellors and teachers kept reminding their students that improved qualifi-



cations lead to better jobs and a better standard of living. The principals advised parents of the ordinary grade students to ensure that their children aimed for the highest grade certificates that were offered.

When advising their students the guidance counsellors at both schools attached much importance to qualifications. The following extracts reflect this.

Counsellor : "Moonsamy, if you get your standard ten, practical grade certificate, you will earn a higher wage than with standard nine qualification. Even if you become a boilermaker, you are going to be paid according to the standard that you passed."

Counsellor : "Mayadevi, if you complete matric you will earn a better salary. It will also help you to get promotions, or to branch out into other fields. The lower your qualification, the more you are forced to stick to your existing job."

Counsellor : "The higher one goes in school, the better are the chances for employment. So Ruben, you should strive for a matric certificate. You will improve your chances if you do."

Films on careers and visiting speakers at Orchard Lane also focussed on the importance of qualifications and training. The films dealt with careers in the postal service, preparation for job interviews, and visiting speakers represented the South African Police, and a leading building society. The speakers and the narrators in the films stressed that while matriculation was a basic entry requirement to many jobs, those who were in possession of higher qualifications stood a better chance of being employed.

Many of the students also expressed similar beliefs about qualifications. They recognised the importance of obtaining a standard-ten certificate in order to get "decent jobs." Some of the boys from the practical grade wanted to study for trade certificates at technical high schools, while girls from this grade wanted to enrol for secretarial and typing courses. Students from both grades also commented on the importance of qualifications related more especially to the use of computers, since they believed that this was crucial for most jobs in the future. The comments of the following students reflect some of these views.

Juggie : "If I had to complete matric in the practical grade, I'll have no chance of getting into a decent job. It is important to have at least a standard ten certificate for a good job. A lower standard is of little use."

Saras : "I like to get a qualification in the use of computers. The world is becoming more computerised. The benefits are great, and the salary is very negotiable. More computers are coming into the world, and it's important to be qualified in this field."

Group leader of discussion, guidance lesson, standard ten practical grade, Ridgemount : "Good qualifications can secure a job such as in the government service. In today's world, jobs cannot be easily obtained because the computer and the machines are taking over. It is important to obtain qualifications in the computer field. Good qualifications can secure most future jobs."

The school-leavers who had an instrumental outlook towards education and qualifications were prepared to put up with the demands of school as long as education could provide opportunities to get good jobs. By contrast, the tertiary education group regarded qualifications as valuable in their own right. These students were more concerned about acquiring appropriate qualifications for careers in medicine, pharmacy, engineering, teaching, social work, and in other high-status professions.

While there was no rejection or total discrediting of paper qualifications amongst the school-leavers, a few of the practical grade students at Ridgemount expressed some doubt about the value of the matriculation certificate, especially for jobs which they had in mind. Some felt that trade qualifications would be more useful, and in some instances "contacts" were seen to be more useful than qualifications.

#### 5.9 THE "MENTAL AND THE "MANUAL"

Several school-leavers, the majority of whom were from Orchard Lane, referred to this distinction between the mental and the manual. The guidance counsellors and teachers in both schools made this same distinction when discussing the students' abilities and educational provisions in the schools. This category accounted for 8.85 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers; 7.58 per cent for school-leavers from the practical grade, and 10.94 per cent for those from the ordinary grade. It made up 10.36 per cent of the content analysed for the tertiary

education group; and 12.18 per cent for the total sample of teachers.

The discussion on the classification and framing of knowledge contained many indirect references to the **"practical"** and **"abstract"** nature of subject material in the curriculum for the two grades. The structure of the curriculum was based on the supposed difference between mental and manual abilities. However, direct references were made to this aspect during parents' meetings and individual counselling sessions. Parents and students were frequently told that schools offered equal opportunities to all students to realise their potentials, but that such equality was based on the students' abilities, interests and IQs. This ideology was used to justify the existence of the practical and ordinary grades, and the schools differentiated between those who were **"academically inclined,"** and those who were **"good with their hands."** This constituted the distinction between the **"mental"** and the **"manual."**

According to the counsellors in both schools, the low IQs of the lower-working-class, practical grade school-leavers meant that they were destined for low-status, manual jobs; while the high IQs of the middle-class, ordinary grade students in the tertiary education group would lead them into non-manual, high-status, professional jobs. This is well illustrated in the counsellor's remarks about Lennie (practical grade, Orchard Lane), a lower-working-class student.

**"Lennie's IQ is low, but he scores better on the non-verbal side. One would expect him to take on a practical job, where there's not much brainwork required. He seems destined for a trade, something mechanical in nature. This would be in keeping with his IQ."**

These lower-working-class students were also frequently reminded that they were **"manually"** rather than **"mentally"** inclined. The counsellors in both schools tried to convince these students that they are **"practically-minded"** people who should be directing their attention to **"practical jobs."** The boys in particular were advised to get into trades and related jobs because of their physical strength. The advice given to David is a good example. He was told that the job of a motor mechanic demanded physical rather than mental effort.



"The mechanic must be skilful with his hands. He needs physical strength. He must have strong arms and shoulders. Mechanics go down on their backs, and underneath on a trolley, and need strength to support and push a gearbox into position. A teacher has to take home piles of books to mark. You don't have to do this. All you do is to wash up, take your lunch-box and return home at the end of the day. But you will get personal satisfaction from your job."

The following conversation between Moonsamy and the guidance counsellor is a further illustration of this point. The counsellor persuaded him to become a carpenter because he was "good with his hands."

Counsellor : Do you like making things with your hands?  
Moonsamy : Yes.  
Counsellor : What are some of the things that you have made?  
Moonsamy : I have made things out of wood.  
Counsellor : Do you think that you will be good at this?  
Moonsamy : Yes.  
Counsellor : I think you should take up carpentry.

However, the lower-middle-class school-leavers from the practical grade were also persuaded by their counsellors that they were practically rather than academically inclined. Prakash and Nesan were addressed in this way.

Counsellor : "Prakash, judging from your exam performance, you are an intelligent boy, but I think you are more of a practical person. Do you like normally using your hands? I think you should complete your matric in a trade school. Their courses are more practical and should suit you."

The counsellor also spoke to me about these boys. He said:

"Prakash tends to do better in subjects like technical drawing than in history. You can see he is practically inclined. He has a higher non-verbal score in his IQ test which indicates this."

"Nesan is quite a handyboy around the house, working with his hands. His father is a tailor. If heredity has anything to do with it, it could be that he is following in his father's mould, doing something of a practical nature as well. Nesan has also proved to himself that he is fit for the practical grade since he could not make it in the ordinary grade."

The practical grade school-leavers were labelled as "practically-minded," with low IQs, and "lacking in verbal skills." Whereas their academic potential was underrated, their teachers often praised them for their practical abilities and their physical

strength. This is clearly reflected in the following comments by the standard nine, practical grade guidance teacher at Orchard Lane, and the principal of Orchard Lane:

Guidance teacher : "Most of these students are practically-minded. They are involved in sports and games. The boys play volleyball and soccer, and don't get down to their academic work. They are more interested in practical work. Their whole life revolves around fun and games. This also applies to the girls."

Principal : "These practical grade students have got no talent for languages or sciences. But when it comes to technical subjects they are very good, as in woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing. These fellows are good with their hands."

In contrast, the counsellors and the teachers frequently praised the students from the tertiary education group for their ability to think in the abstract, and for solving problems. On the basis of this, they were advised to choose careers that involved such mental abilities. For example, Devan from Orchard Lane was told:

"Since you have done very well in maths and physics you can get into any of the fields in engineering. You can become a professional engineer, the person who does all the brainwork, or an artisan engineer, the one who really does the work itself. You may even work at a level in between the professional and the artisan."

Both groups of students absorbed the ideology of the "mental", "manual" split of school and education. This was reflected in the social relations which existed between practical grade and ordinary grade students. There was hardly any contact between these two groups, both outside and inside the school. While having a vague idea of the work done in practical grade classrooms, most ordinary grade students believed that these students were of inferior academic ability, but were nevertheless good at "practical" pursuits. This judgment was based on their observation of these students making things like coffee tables, metal stands and so on. They contrasted this with their own work which was "theoretical" and therefore "more taxing."

Both the ordinary grade school-leavers, as well as the students from the tertiary education group formed such impressions of

practical grade students. This is reflected in the views expressed by the following students.

Perumal : "I know that the practical grade students work mostly with their hands. They do woodwork, technical drawing, and metalwork. They do more practical work, and we do mostly theory. I like working with my hands, too."

Saras : "I don't have much contact with practical grade pupils, so I don't really know what goes on in their classes. However, I feel that they are just like us, but they haven't the ability to be where we are. I feel they shouldn't be degraded. They have a better physical ability, creative ability. They are people like us, but it's just that they haven't got the potential."

Mohan (tertiary education group, Orchard Lane) : "I have spoken to a few boys from the practical grade, but they are not really my friends. They tell us about their woodwork, etc. They do more practical work, compared with our work. Our work is more taxing. There is more theory involved."

Similarly, the practical grade students also had very few friends in the ordinary grade, and were ignorant of the nature of work done in those classrooms. All that they could say was that ordinary grade work was "higher," "more advanced" and "harder" than their own. This can be seen from the remarks of these two practical grade students.

Pat : "I have no close friends in the ordinary grade, and I don't know what work they do. But I feel their work is a bit hard. In maths, they work out more difficult problems and use different methods. They have to remember all the steps involved. We just go for the closest answers. Their work is confusing, compared to ours."

Mayadevi : "I have some friends in the ordinary grade, and they tell me that they learn things in greater detail. This is because they are in the higher grade. Some of them compare their work to ours, and underestimate us. I just listen to them and don't say anything. But I really feel hurt."

Some of the working-class school-leavers from both grades also believed that they were manually rather than academically inclined. They were quite emphatic that they did not want "office jobs" because they preferred to work with their hands.

## 5.10 RACIAL SEPARATION

The organisation of schooling had important implications for the students' preparation for entry into a labour market characterised by racial divisions. The fact that they were educated in schools which were administered on the lines of racial separation meant that there were hardly any opportunities for inter-racial contact. To this must be added the fact that the students lived in residential areas created for their own race group. Thus, the organisation of schooling, the separate Group Areas, and the segmentation of the labour market clearly reflect the features of the South African macro society as affected by the ideology of apartheid.

However, very few of the school-leavers and students from the tertiary education group discussed this topic directly. The comparatively few references to this topic were made mainly by the counsellors and the teachers. This category accounted for 0.59 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers; 0.43 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, and 0.93 per cent for those from Ridgemount. It also made up 3.59 per cent of the content analysed for the entire sample of teachers; 2.22 per cent for teachers from Orchard Lane, and 5.19 per cent for teachers from Ridgemount. This category accounted for 3.11 per cent of the content analysed for students from the tertiary education group.

Though there were hardly any discussions during lessons on race and apartheid in either of these schools, there were clear indications that the experiences of Indian students was that of isolation from other race groups. This is reflected in the following extracts from guidance lessons in the standard ten, ordinary grade at Ridgemount.

### First Lesson

<u>Teacher</u> :	How many of you have friends among other race groups?
<u>Student</u> :	I was formerly at Michael House, a private school. I have quite a few White friends, and one of them is Russel. We spent two years together. He plays soccer and he goes sailing. We still communicate with each other by letter. I also meet him once in a while.



Teacher : There seems to be a gap between ourselves and other race groups. In a class of thirty-five students, we have only one who has a friend in the White race group. We do not seem to have sufficient contact with members of other race groups.

### Second Lesson

Teacher : "The mayor recently invited about eight hundred students of all races to breakfast at the City Hall. The theme of this meeting was race relations. For many people it was an historic event. For the first time in their lives, they sat at one table with Africans, Coloureds and Whites. I have sat in gatherings where, even if there were members of other races, they were far away. I generally sat with my Indian friends."

In their discussions on race, counsellors and teachers usually referred to the subordinate status of Indians, Africans and Coloureds in the South African society. For example, they mentioned this factor as one of the hurdles that these groups face when they apply for jobs in competition with Whites. The standard nine, practical grade guidance teacher at Orchard Lane made specific reference to this in a lesson on "Interviews for Jobs."

"One of my friends applied for a job for which all the other applicants were Whites. He felt that his chances were almost nil. He was very sure that the job would be given to one of the Whites. But at the interview he mentioned that in addition to the required qualifications he also had political science and French which he considered to be useful for this job. This swung the decision in his favour."

The counsellor at Orchard Lane who advised Champa from the ordinary grade about the opportunities for employment for physical education teachers was also aware of the obstacles created by racial divisions. He said:

"To get a job as a physical education teacher, you can apply to a Coloured school or an Indian school. If you wish to, you can also apply to a White school, but they won't employ you. You have a better chance of being placed in the Indian schools; if not, then in Coloured schools."

Though discussions on race and apartheid were rare, whenever they took place, teachers were extremely cautious in their presentation of the subject matter. It was quite apparent that

only certain selected and "approved" ideas were to be presented. The discussions had to be "non-controversial," "non-political," and "objective." The hidden curriculum which was at work gave some idea of the extent to which knowledge in the curriculum was controlled by the ideology of the dominant group, and how this influenced the minds of teachers. The extracts used to illustrate this are taken again from lessons in the ordinary grade at Ridgemount, and the practical grade at Orchard Lane.

Guidance Lesson - Standard Eight, Ordinary Grade, Ridgemount

Teacher : "In our country, you must remember that the school is controlled by the government. A few teachers may agree with you, but still our hands are tied. In fact, by allowing students to discuss such matters as apartheid in education, teachers could be jeopardising their own position."

Geography Lesson - Standard Eight, Ordinary Grade, Ridgemount

Student : The Group Areas Act also causes large-scale migration.

Teacher : You must avoid the term, 'Group Areas' and refer to it as 'separate development.' Remember you are going to use this in your examination, but the important thing is not to get emotional about it. In other countries, too, people move for political reasons. This does not apply only to South Africa.

History Lesson - Standard Nine, Practical Grade, Orchard Lane

Teacher : How would you define apartheid? Don't be afraid to speak.

First Student : Different races have to live in different areas.

Second Student : The beaches are also reserved for different races.

Third Student : The cinemas too. You are not allowed in certain cinemas and other places of entertainment, reserved for Whites.

Teacher : Whites who marry Indians can't live in White areas.

Teacher : So what is the aim of apartheid?

This cautious approach, and the insistence on dealing with racial and political issues in a neutral and objective way is evident in the following extract. The standard eight, ordinary grade English teacher at Ridgemount explained her approach to Alan Paton's novel, *Cry the Beloved Country* in these terms:

"This is quite a difficult novel to teach as it is political. You know what these children are thinking of for much of the time. They are thinking about boycotts, etc. Their political views come out quite frequently in their compositions. The Education Department approved of a novel like this provided one deals with it objectively."

Some students, however, were forthright in their criticisms of apartheid. In their standard ten year, the ordinary grade students at Ridgemount pointed out to the guidance counsellor that some of the careers he discussed were still reserved for Whites. They cited examples of jobs which they applied for and the replies which they received. During a guidance lesson, the practical grade students at Orchard Lane joked openly about apartheid on beaches. Generally, the students from both schools favoured a policy of integration of the races, as is evident in these remarks by certain group leaders in a discussion on race relations in standard ten ordinary grade at Ridgemount.

First Group Leader : "We are all South Africans, and should move away from things like apartheid and the separation of cultures. If we believe in separation, then we will be suspicious of other race groups. We will either look down upon or feel inferior to other groups. But if we mix with them, we will know more about them, and we can learn to live with them."

Second Group Leader : "We believe that integration should start amongst the youth because they have fewer prejudices concerning colour and creed. Our school should arrange regular meetings for us with students of other races. In this way we can get to know them better. Sports meetings and debates can be arranged."

#### 5.11 GENDER

A little less than half the number of school-leavers, and all those from the tertiary education group, discussed the question of gender. It accounted for 5.01 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers, and 5.70 per cent for the tertiary education group. This category also made up 5.69 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from the practical grade, as against 3.91 per cent for ordinary grade school-leavers. For the total sample of teachers it made up 8.38 per cent of the content.

The counsellors' perceptions of gender influenced the advice they gave on careers. For example, jobs for girls must be suited to their feminine nature. Such jobs should not demand too much physical strength, and the hours of work should enable women to give sufficient time to domestic duties. The physical characteristics of girls were very much in the minds of counsellors when they made comments such as, "she is a smart looking young lady. She will probably make a very good secretary." When speaking



about Praba from the tertiary education group at Ridgemount, and Shireen, for example, the counsellors said:

"If you look at Shireen's personality, she seems to be so prim, so proper, so very feminine. Her personality fits the job of a typist. You can visualise this very elegant secretary."

"Praba will make a success as a physical education teacher. It's the glamour side of it. She is an attractive looking girl, and I get the impression that she is very conscious of this. She wants to be out there in the field in her track suit, looking good as it were."

Some teachers also kept these feminine characteristics in mind when predicting that some girls would most probably end up as housewives. The standard ten, practical grade, housecraft teacher at Orchard Lane spoke about Kalavathees in these terms.

"My general impression is that she is going to settle for a life as a housewife. She doesn't seem to be cut out for much else. If she has to be in a job I will be surprised. She will make a perfect housewife."

Being a girl also meant that the choice of jobs was limited to those especially reserved for females. This is aptly illustrated in the counsellor's remarks about Mayadevi:

"She may do well in banking or secretarial field. She speaks very well. But she is tied down by certain factors. One is that she is a girl, and secondly, she is from the practical grade. So there's not much choice left, besides secretarial and clerical work. She will fit into these jobs very well."

As was the case with practical grade students generally, the girls in this grade were encouraged to get into lower-level jobs like nurse-aid, switchboard operator, receptionist, dress-maker, waitress, and door-to-door saleslady. Girls in the ordinary grade were counselled about teaching, social work, medicine, and pharmacy. Though these jobs enjoy a higher status, they are nevertheless considered to be suitable for females. Other typical female jobs which were mentioned to students in both grades were: hairdresser, secretary, and typist. The counsellors' comments revealed how conscious they were that they were dealing with girls. Their hours of work must fit in with "household duties," and that marriage and work should complement each other. They were also reminded that once they were married, their jobs would no longer be permanent. For example, the visiting

speaker from a building society said to the Orchard Lane students that:

"If we employ a girl, and she gets married we terminate her services. She has to re-apply for her job."

The boys, too, were encouraged to set their sights on jobs which were considered to be reserved exclusively for males. For example, boys in the practical grade were given detailed information about jobs such as electrician, bricklayer, carpenter, motor mechanic, and plumber. Ordinary grade boys were told about jobs such as radio and television technician, engineer and architect.

Gender structuring was evident in the way girls from both grades framed their aspirations in terms of sexual politics. For example, they wanted to be nurses, secretaries, bank tellers, receptionists, metermaids, teachers, air hostesses and social workers. They were mainly concerned that the demands of such jobs should not be so great as to prevent them from fulfilling their duties as mothers and wives. Such views were expressed by school-leavers, as well as those from the tertiary education group. The following quotations illustrate this.

Praba : "I may take up teaching. It's an ideal job for a girl because of the long holidays. This will help me to give time to household work once I get married."

Devigee (tertiary education group, Orchard Lane) : "My parents want me to become a teacher. They say that the hours of work are suitable for a girl. It won't interfere with my duties as a housewife. I think I agree with them."

The female school-leavers from both grades were particularly keen to help their future husbands in times of financial difficulty. They were greatly conscious of their supportive role to boost the family income by being employed. Some like Kalavathee were also very conscious of their future roles as housewives. This was evident from the reasons she gave for studying housecraft.

"In this subject you learn things like baking, cooking, sewing and home decorating. With this knowledge we can learn to take better care of the home, and to be good wives."

However, the girls were not absolutely submissive. There were many instances during guidance lessons when they expressed their opposition to male domination. While the girls in both grades generally acknowledged that they have more freedom today than their mothers had when they were young, several complained about **"restrictions"** imposed on them. Since they were in co-educational schools, and many have brothers they spoke from direct experience of the discrimination against females. Though these grievances were expressed mainly by the school-leavers, a few students from the tertiary education group expressed similar views.

Girls in both grades complained that they did not have much time to study since their parents gave them a lot of **"housework"** to do. Some said that while boys are encouraged to be independent at an early age; girls are not fully independent even after marriage. They felt that their parents were unduly strict with them, and that the same kind of control did not apply to boys. For example, Mayadevi describes the extent to which her parents controlled her movements even when she went on a school excursion:

**"It's unfair when boys are allowed to enjoy life, and we are not. If we know how to behave our parents should send us out. When I wanted to go with the school to the Royal Show, my father didn't want to send me. All my friends were going, and I pointed this out to him. He agreed to send me, but my parents also went along to the Show on the same day. They went by car. And wherever I was on the showgrounds, I saw them. But I enjoyed myself with my friends."**

Both the school-leavers, as well as students from the tertiary education group, also complained about the strict rules of the school, which separated the sexes. This applied particularly to Ridgemount.

**"Trust"** was one of the main areas for complaint about parents' differential treatment of boys and girls. Some of the boys in this study also believed that girls were inherently untrustworthy and weak willed, and could be easily led astray. Thus, they approved of strict parental control over girls.

Some of the boys in the practical grade at Ridgemount spoke about **"decent"** and **"loose"** girls. Loose girls **"go out often"** and are **"unsuitable for wives."** Good girls **"stay at home and**

wash the dishes." There were boys in the practical grade at both schools, who were not keen that their wives should work since "working wives are unfaithful," and also because they will acquire greater power to challenge the decisions of their husbands.

The girls, however, rejected such arguments and believed that with "better educational qualifications" and by getting good jobs they would be able to supplement the family's income.

#### 5.12 SOCIAL CLASS

The knowledge which the counsellors and teachers had of a student's class background also influenced their interpretations of the careers which they predicted for these students. The policies adopted in the schools, the curriculum, and the guidance and counselling programme seemed to favour the middle-class students. The influence of social class was also reflected in the students' awareness of social and economic status, especially when they spoke about their career aspirations.

However, comparatively few school-leavers discussed this topic. This category made up 3.24 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers, and 5.70 per cent for students from the tertiary education group. It also made up 1.42 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from the practical grade, as against 6.25 per cent for those from the ordinary grade. For the total sample of teachers, this category accounted for 7.39 per cent of the content that was analysed; 4.81 per cent for teachers from Orchard Lane, and 10.39 per cent for those from Ridgemount.

The teachers and counsellors had certain stereotyped impressions of students from the lower working class. They were often described as coming from "practically-minded" families since their parents or brothers and sisters were factory workers, labourers and so on. It was felt that children from such family backgrounds would cope more easily with apprenticeships than with studies at university. When speaking about one of the working-class boys, the counsellor at Orchard Lane said:

"He can't make it for engineering. His results are bad. But if you look at his father's occupation, it is a practical one. He won't be able to manage a university degree, but will be able to manage an apprenticeship. He comes



from a family that's practically-minded. His father is a handyman. So obviously there has been some sort of unconscious influence on him."

When referring to one of the working-class girls he said:

"I know her family well. Generally, the members don't go in for professional work. They like the skilled and semi-professional work like motor car salesman, taxi driver and so on."

By contrast, when referring to the family backgrounds of the middle-class students of the tertiary education group, the counsellors felt that they should choose careers in keeping with the status of their families. The influence of social class was once again clearly evident. For example, when one of the girls from Ridgemount spoke about neuro-surgery as a possible career, the counsellor remarked:

"I think she is heading in the right direction. This girl is a go-getter. She will probably do well in any field that she wants to enter. She now likes neuro-surgery. It will probably satisfy the parents' need for a status symbol."

Middle-class values and perspectives also characterised much of the content in the curriculum, and the guidance-counselling programmes in particular. The counsellors frequently drew the attention of their students to the importance of planning for the future, and stressed the importance of individual achievement and long-term goals. In almost every individual counselling session that I observed the students were asked to imagine what their positions would be like in about three to four years' time, and they were asked to comment on things like their future earnings, places of residence, plans which they had in mind for their families, and so on. The middle-class school-leavers and some upper-working-class students and those from the tertiary education group were able to identify with such goals, but many of the lower-working-class school-leavers could not.

The students got to know either explicitly or implicitly what the teachers thought about them, and this partially accounted for their success or failure at school. While many teachers held negative views about practical grade students, especially of those from the lower working class, very few teachers appeared to be overtly hostile to this group or gave the impression

of being consciously anti-working class. Many in fact were genuinely concerned about the future of these students, and expressed concern that they were barred from entering tertiary education. There was, nevertheless, a discrepancy between the expressed concern and their actual behaviour when interacting with these students in the classroom. Though they did not intend to do so, the teachers' behaviour often resulted in negative consequences. Several indicated that they held lower expectations of these school-leavers, and some were even prepared to tolerate poorer standards of academic work.

Those who labelled these students negatively referred to their lack of ability, interest and concentration. This is well illustrated in the case of the standard nine, practical grade business methods teacher's description of Pat:

"He is not really interested. He has always been found wanting. The assignments are not completed on time. During lessons, he puts his head on the desk and sleeps. I spoke to him about his general attitude to work, and what will be expected from him when he leaves school. If he is never going to give us anything on time, how will he be able to satisfy his boss at work? School for him is just fun. He should be on the new lower grade."

Pat's standard ten business economics teacher said:

"He is not prepared to work hard. He doesn't get the kind of guidance that is necessary at home. The family doesn't place very high importance on education. They have a shebeen at home. Pat helps by serving drinks etc. to the customers. That kind of environment is not conducive to school work. For example, his father will find it difficult to say, 'It's time to get on with your schoolwork,' or 'You are not doing well in school.'"

Teachers also frequently employed a cultural deficit model when accounting for the failure of these students in school. It was alleged that their parents do not value education as much as the middle-class parents of the tertiary education group, and that they do not support their children emotionally or educationally. The counsellor at Orchard Lane said:

"About ninety - per cent of these students in the practical grade come from the lower-income group, so basically they are disadvantaged from the beginning. One way in which they are particularly disadvantaged is parental interest and attitude. Even if you have to arrange meetings

for them, they will be conspicuous by their absence. They won't even query why their children are in the practical grade. They don't even visit the school to find out how they can motivate their children to get into the ordinary grade."

When commenting on the behaviour of the practical grade, working-class students the teachers at Ridgemount also explained this in terms of a cultural deficit model. This can be seen in the following extract concerning the students' interest in reading.

Standard nine, practical grade guidance teacher, Ridgemount:

"These students have poor reading habits and limited interests. This is because of deprivation at home, and they are looking for some form of escapism. This is why books on cars and machinery fascinate them. These interests have sort of outlined their future careers for them. At least they have some goals."

By contrast, the middle-class students in the tertiary education group were seen in a very positive light. Teachers referred to the interest shown by their parents in their children's progress at school. They also commented on these students' "good manners," "speech," "neatness," "responsibility," "willingness to help teachers," "politeness," "obedience" and "confidence." These students were labelled as bright, and as being suitable material for university. They were considered to be "hard working," "pleasant" and "serious about school and studies." In several cases their teachers predicted that they would enrol for prestigious degrees in science, and in a few cases they were considered to have all the "credentials for medicine."

However, despite being in the minority, there were also teachers at both schools who were unwilling to accept their colleague's stereotypical pictures of lower-working-class, practical grade students. Instead, they recognised that some of these students were victims of a dubious process of educational selection, and they also referred to the group's disadvantaged position in a divisive society and labour market.

During counselling sessions and discussions with me, several students indicated that they were very conscious of their social-class status. This consciousness seemed to affect their perceptions of their future careers. The working-class school-leavers in particular often mentioned the financial insecurity



of their families as the main reason for lowering their aspirations. Some also referred to domestic problems, alcoholism and other related matters.

On the other hand, the middle-class students from the tertiary education group were particularly anxious to maintain their status. Those whose parents wanted them to become doctors were anxious not to let their families down. For example, Rabia from Ridgemount indicated that it was important to elevate the status of her family by pursuing a medical career.

"I really want to do pharmacy, but my father wants me to do medicine. Thus far only my sister has been to university. My parents want at least one person in the family to become a doctor. My sister is studying to be a social worker. My family feels that that is not up to much."

#### 5.13 GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING

The various courses of study and subjects in the ordinary and practical grades have already been outlined in Chapter Two of Part Two. In addition to these provisions, the students from both grades were also given individual counselling and lessons on general guidance. Much of this programme was orientated towards careers.

Reference has already been made to certain aspects of guidance and counselling in the discussions on race, class, gender, the mental and the manual, and qualifications. Just over half the number of school-leavers, and all students from the tertiary education group discussed this aspect of their school experience. It accounted for 4.13 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers, and 8.81 per cent of the content analysed for members of the tertiary education group. This category also made up 9.98 per cent of the content analysed for the total sample of teachers.

Both schools had full-time counsellors who were studying for the University Diploma in School Guidance. During the period of this study, there were two counsellors at Ridgemount, and one at Orchard Lane. The counsellor at Ridgemount was transferred to another school at the end of the first year of this study.

The second counsellor then took over, and remained with the students till their final year in school. Most of the teachers who were in charge of general guidance lessons, and who are referred to as guidance teachers in this study, were not qualified in this field. In several cases, they were selected because they were **"running short of the required number of teaching periods"** to make up their teaching load.

Guidance lessons and counselling sessions were characterised by the distinctions which were made between practical or low-status jobs for practical grade students, and professional or high-status jobs for ordinary grade students. There was also a stress on ability, interest, school performance and personality traits when students were matched to jobs. Extensive use was made of interest and IQ tests, especially with ordinary grade students. The Thurstone and Rothwell Miller Interest Tests were also used to predict careers related to specific interests in the following fields: outdoor, mechanical, scientific, medical, practical, clerical, persuasive, aesthetic, literary and musical. Other notable features of these lessons included the distinction made between **"mental"** and **"manual"** abilities; the importance of qualifications and training; social class, gender, and race.

After he had administered interest and IQ tests to two practical grade school-leavers, the counsellor at Orchard Lane discussed the results with me. The quotations which appear below illustrate the criteria which he used.

Counsellor : "Moonsamy has a much higher non-verbal IQ. This means he will do well at tasks in which he doesn't have to use verbal skills. His wish to be a boilermaker is an appropriate choice since this is a practical type of job. He is a physically active boy. To be a boilermaker you need to be a strong chap."

Counsellor : "Mayadevi should do well in any job which involves the use of figures. This is brought out in the interest test which I conducted with her. This also correlates well with her school performance in maths and accountancy although she is in the practical grade. She has a low score in dealing with people, a very low score in communication, and also in science and technology. Her real interest is in working with figures."

At Ridgemount, the counsellor adopted a similar approach. For example, this is evident in the advice which he gave to Kesval. He said:

"The highest score which you obtained on the Rothwell Miller Interest Test was in the mechanical field. You said you wanted to become a radio or television technician, or a carpenter. These jobs involve the use of your hands. You seem to be heading in the right direction since you belong to the mechanical field. The test confirms this."

Some of the careers which were frequently mentioned to practical grade students in both schools included the following: fitter and turner, boilermaker, secretary, motor mechanic, panel-beater, welder, bricklayer, shop assistant, switchboard operator, armature winder, carpenter, plasterer, journeyman, plumber, radio and television technician, sheet metal worker, shopfitter, upholsterer, hairdresser and typist. They were encouraged to seek such jobs during their school holidays and weekends so as to get experience. They were also made to feel that these were not low-status jobs.

Some teachers even encouraged these students to accept such jobs when these became available, even if this meant leaving school soon after standard eight. The principal of Orchard Lane said:

"We encourage practical grade students to take on a job when it becomes available. For example, a boy who becomes a panel-beater after standard eight is as good as a fellow who gets through standard ten. So why waste two years? If he gets the benefit of those two years, and the fellow is robust and well built, then we ask him to go ahead. How much can he improve himself with two extra years of schooling with the type of syllabus designed for the practical grade? These students are triers, but they have their limits."

While discussing careers for practical grade students, the counsellors frequently mentioned that they felt that many boys in this grade should take up trades. For example, the counsellor at Orchard Lane predicted that Lennie would get such a job. He said:

"His IQ is low, having a higher non-verbal score. He has the necessary requirements and aptitude for entering a trade. This is in keeping with his IQ."

By contrast, when students from the ordinary grade were counselled, they were encouraged to aspire to high-status jobs which will provide security and a good income. The standard ten guidance teacher at Ridgemount reminded the class of the insecure nature of jobs in factories, and said:

**"Jobs in factories will certainly not offer you the kind of security that you are looking for. In these jobs it's very easy to be put on short time. In other jobs like teaching or medicine, there is greater security. Your services will be in demand."**

The ordinary grade school-leavers were advised about clerical, sales and administrative jobs while students from the tertiary education group were encouraged to become professional engineers, doctors, pharmacists, geologists, radiologists, physiotherapists, teachers, dentists, and speech and hearing therapists. Much time was also spent outlining courses available at university, technikon and college of education and careers associated with these.

When discussing one of the tertiary education group student's preference for medicine, the counsellor at Ridgemount said to me:

**"Certainly she is medical school material. Her IQ is 145. There are not many who have this score. She did very well in the half-yearly exam. Choosing medicine is certainly a step in the right direction. Her IQ supports it, her interest supports it, and the status factor also does."**

While many school-leavers from both grades seemed to accept the underlying messages of guidance and counselling, there were some who had disregarded these messages. For example, one of the school-leavers was not keen to accept the counsellor's advice that he should become a salesman. The counsellor's judgement was based on the score that this student achieved on the Thurstone Interest Test. However, **"money"** rather than **"interest"** was the student's main concern.

When two of the school-leavers were urged to improve their school performance and to strive for improved qualifications so that they could get good jobs, they felt that it would be better to rely on **"contacts."**

A few school-leavers, as well as some students from the tertiary

education group, also expressed reservations about the value of guidance lessons. However, there were others who valued the advice given on careers.

#### 5.14 STUDENTS' CAREER ASPIRATIONS

This item was analysed for almost all the school-leavers, and students from the tertiary education group. This category accounted for 16.81 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers, and 12.95 per cent of the content analysed for those from the tertiary education group. It also made up 17.24 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, as against 15.89 per cent for those from Ridgemount. For the total sample of teachers, it comprised 8.58 per cent of the content.

One of the striking features about most of the students' choices, especially among the school-leavers, was the fact that they changed their minds often. This happened, for example, when they changed their curriculum, thus cutting themselves off from certain careers and directing their attention to others. They also changed their minds as a result of the influence of friends and relatives. Financial and family problems and other related domestic issues led some students to abandon their earlier decisions. The cases of the following students illustrate this situation.

When he was in standard eight, Perumal said that he wished to become an engineer. However, in the middle of standard nine, he said:

**"I'm not certain of that now. Looking at my results, I don't think I can make it."**

At the beginning of standard ten, he changed his mind once more, wishing to take up an apprenticeship or to train as a telephone technician. He said:

**"If I don't get a good job, I might go to the technikon and train as a technician. I cannot go to varsity because I've changed the subjects in my course, and am now entering for the Senior Certificate Exam."**

Another student who changed her career preferences was Saras. At the



beginning of standard nine, she said:

"At first I thought of nursing, but now I've changed my mind. Some of my friends told me that the salary is not that good. I want to do something in the secretarial field. I'm doing typing and accountancy in school, and this may help."

At the beginning of standard ten, she expressed a wish to study computer programming at the technikon, but later in the year, she once again changed her mind.

"I have now thought of joining the police force. One of my cousins, and also my father's friend are in the force. They spoke to me about joining."

For the school-leavers, the choices of the various courses and subjects were made with employment in mind. For example, several ordinary grade students chose General Courses so that they could include subjects like typing and accountancy. Those who chose Science Courses mentioned the importance of including mathematics and physical science. All of these subjects were associated with specific jobs which they had in mind, such as computer programmer, electrician, and so on.

Though the practical grade students were given a straight course to take, they could also choose from a restricted range of subjects. These students also pointed out that certain subjects offered better chances of employment. For example, many of the boys who wished to enter a trade felt that mathematics, science, metalwork and woodwork would be useful. At the end of standard eight, they gave up history and geography and took some of these other subjects. Nesan said:

"I decided to change from history and geography because these subjects don't play an important role when you are looking for employment. What they are interested in these days are science and maths. I also included woodwork because in case of unemployment, I can make certain items and sell these."

David also expressed a similar point of view. He said:

"I'm doing maths, science, metalwork and woodwork. I don't think I would have chosen history and geography. I want to do a trade, and for most trades you need maths and science."

These aspirations can only be understood if interpreted against the background of the students' own culture. Choice of job rested on cultural interpretations of available opportunities, and the restrictions they had to endure. Some of these constraints

included the material conditions of their existence, the apartheid society, their social-class backgrounds, economic factors, and the bureaucratic features of schooling. However, these constraints did not in themselves account for the choices made by the school-leavers; on the contrary, the choices were made according to how these students perceived and interpreted these constraining situations.

The value which they attached to educational qualifications, as a necessary preparation for work was related to their knowledge of high unemployment, and the position of Indians as an intermediate status group in a racially-divided society. They realised that unless their efforts to circumvent racial exclusion in employment were successful they were likely to find themselves in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs.

Most of the school-leavers were also conscious of the need to get jobs that paid well, were secure, and offered chances of promotion. All of this was defined within the field of employment traditionally reserved for Indians, such as clerical, trades, apprenticeships and so. These are sometimes referred to as "Indian jobs." However, such jobs are not necessarily those which are done only by Indians, but those which Indians perceive as open to their race group. There are instances when they have to compete with members of other race groups. For example, when Whites accept such jobs, they may regard them as "low-level." Africans on the other hand may regard them as "high-status" jobs. The status is therefore relative to the perceptions of those who compete for them.

These school-leavers spoke of the need to be ambitious if they were to avoid unemployment or dead-end jobs. When stating their preferences, they mentioned things like, "there's a lot of money in this job," "I will be earning good money to save a deposit for a house of my own," "I will stick to my work and strive for better promotions." They were also aware that in a world of technological advancement, appropriate qualifications were vital.

Both boys and girls were anxious to avoid unskilled work, and hoped that a declining job market would not prevent them from becoming boilermakers, apprentices, mechanics, technicians, welders, carpenters, electricians, hairdressers, typists and



so on. According to them, these were jobs that "paid well," and it was possible as a motor mechanic, for example, to earn "extra money" by repairing cars at home during weekends and evenings. Some of their fathers were also involved in such "part-time" work. The boys also liked these jobs instead of office work because they liked "working" with their "hands." Ruben, for example, said:

"I am interested in the electrical field. I enjoy fixing and maintaining machines and motor vehicles. The wage is quite reasonable. I like to serve an apprenticeship. I prefer this to an office job because there you are always behind a desk."

The boys in the ordinary grade were keen to become electricians, technicians, computer programmers, and clerks. The students in both grades got to know about such jobs and were attracted to them after discussions with friends, relatives and neighbours who were employed in some of these fields. Juggie and Jaylal were keen to get into such jobs. This can be seen from their remarks below:

Jaylal : "I'll go to the technikon to train as a technician or an electrician. My friends who are in such jobs told me about things like the training period, the salary and promotion prospects. With maths and science I may stand a chance."

Juggie : "I want to become a telephone technician because of the salary, and also because it's a secure job. I have friends who are in this job. They told me about the conditions, the wages, the holidays and so on."

The girls in this study were less attracted to factory work, and aspired to careers such as nursing, teaching, social work and computer programming. In a few cases, the ambitions of girls from the practical grade were quite unrealistic. One of them, for example, wanted to be a veterinary surgeon, while three others wanted to be fully qualified nurses. Another wanted to be a bank teller. When these girls realised that such jobs were not accessible to practical grade students, they lowered their aspirations and mentioned jobs like receptionist, switchboard operator, nurse-aid, metermaid, and secretarial assistant. Like the practical grade boys, they got to know about such jobs from friends, relatives and neighbours.

The aspirations of the ordinary grade girls were much higher. They preferred to be computer programmers, teachers, social workers, accountants, physiotherapists, bank tellers, and high-level secretaries. They were aware that such jobs were within their reach since they were eligible for Matriculation Exemption Certificates. They supported these choices of careers by mentioning subjects in the curriculum, which were relevant. For example, mathematics and science were considered to be useful for computer programming, while English for teaching, and typing, accountancy and mathematics for secretarial work and bank tellers. The girl's acceptance of the ideology of careers-counselling was revealed in their reference to certain personality attributes which they felt fitted them for certain jobs. Those who wanted to be teachers and social workers mentioned that they **"liked working with people."**

By comparison with the school-leavers the career preferences of the tertiary education group reflected their greater awareness of social status. They had the support of parents and relatives who were **"knowledgeable"** about high-status careers. The boys, for example, were anxious to become mechanical engineers, doctors, aeronautical engineers, and chartered accountants, while the girls wanted to be psychiatrists, pharmacists, doctors, teachers, lawyers and social workers. Unlike the school-leavers, these middle-class students read widely about such careers, and were encouraged to do so by their teachers and family members.

#### 5.15 ATTITUDES TO SCHOOL AND EDUCATION

Central to the philosophy of several members of staff in both schools was the belief that students should develop the **"right attitudes"** to school and life; that education should be valued highly; that priority should be given to working hard in order to achieve good examination results. The majority of the school-leavers, and nearly every student in the tertiary education group reacted positively to these demands. However, a few school-leavers from both grades were indifferent and seemed reluctant to accept these values.

Almost every student in the sample gave some indication of his or her attitude to school and education. This category accounted for 12.39 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers; 11.92 per cent for students from the

tertiary education group; and 9.78 per cent for the total sample of teachers.

The principals and teachers frequently reminded the students and their parents of the need to develop the **"right attitudes"** towards education and life in general. During guidance lessons and speeches delivered at parents' meetings, the message was quite clear: that if one approaches school and its authority with the **"right attitudes,"** then employers and tertiary educational institutions will also be approached in this way. Students were often reminded of the importance of punctuality, productivity, and the ill-effects of smoking and drinking.

The teachers in both schools spoke highly of those school-leavers, who, they thought, were hard workers and displayed positive attitudes. Such students included two ordinary grade and four practical grade school-leavers.

However, generally there were distinct differences in the experiences of schooling between the school-leavers and the tertiary education group, and more especially between practical grade and ordinary grade students. The ordinary grade students from the school-leaving and tertiary education groups stayed at school longer, acquired more certification, and regarded school more positively than practical grade students. The latter expressed many grievances about their treatment in school, did less well in examinations and in some cases even displayed overt forms of resistance. They resented the authority of the schools, and sometimes attempted to counter it through non-cooperation.

There were at least eight school-leavers from both grades who did not pay attention during lessons, were frequently absent from school, did not hand in homework on time, or did not prepare seriously for examinations. The teachers complained about their **"lack of interest"** and their **"casual attitude to work."** Some of these students also admitted that they did not take their work too seriously. The following quotations reflect this.

Jaylal : "I've done badly in the exams because I don't think I've been working very hard. Maybe I am taking life too easy. I think I was fooling

around too much, inside and outside of the classroom. I should give more time to my studies, but I find it difficult to concentrate."

Perumal : "My poor performance in the exams in physics is because I forgot to give enough time to this subject. I spent more time on biology, and left physics till the last minute. However, it was too late."

However, the majority of the school-leavers - irrespective of class, sex, or grade in school - showed an appreciation of the value of education. Those who were forced to leave school early because of financial and related problems regretted that they were unable to continue. Other practical grade, as well as ordinary grade, school-leavers, also appreciated their **"hard working"** teachers who took time to **"explain things,"** were well prepared, sympathetic and sacrificed time to attend to students' problems. They were very critical of teachers who **"wasted"** their time, and who were **"unprepared."** Some of the students' impressions of their teachers can be gauged from the following comments.

Champa : "Our English teacher knows how to explain things and is always prepared to help us. Our typing teacher is also very understanding. When we have personal problems we can talk to him about it. But our Afrikaans teacher doesn't usually pay attention to those of us in the front row. She goes so fast that we don't understand what she is saying."

Savy : "The English and accountancy teachers are careful to explain things clearly. If we don't understand a section, we tell them so, and they take their time to explain."

Jaylal : "We feel free to consult the accountancy teacher. If we have any problems we are not afraid to ask. But most of us are scared of the physics teacher. It's because of the way he threatens us. His teaching comes directly from the textbook. Some of us felt that it was better to read the textbook than to listen to him."

While the students in both schools were not involved in open confrontation with teachers, this did not mean that they were docile conformists. They were highly critical of rigid control and discipline in school. School-leavers, as well as the tertiary education group, disapproved of the **"unnecessary separation"** of boys and girls on the school grounds. They also rejected



school rules which insisted on **"approved hair styles and dress."** However, their resistance to these policies did not assume physically aggressive or overt forms. It can be described as passive, and was integrally related and shaped by their group's deep respect for education.

Teachers were also accused of frequently insulting and degrading practical grade students, telling them they were fit for manual work. Sheila and Kalavathee, for example, described the attitude of some of their teachers:

Sheila : "He used to say 'you practical grade students never seem to co-operate. The first thing that you are going to do when you leave school is to work in the factory.' He also said that we have very low mentalities. As a result, many of them used to feel that they are low, and they used to carry on that way. They never made any progress. But a few of us tried to show this teacher that we were better than he thought we were. At the end of the year exam, we really put him to the test."

Kalavathee : "Mrs A scolds us a lot. She insults the whole class, saying that we are in the practical grade because we can't learn."

While the reactions of the school-leavers cannot be simply classified as **"pro-school"** or **"anti-school,"** their approach was riddled with many contradictions. There were several instances when both practical grade and ordinary grade students indicated that while they were in favour of education, they were quite critical of the policies and practices of the school.

However, there was a distinctive difference in the approach which the school-leavers and students of the tertiary education group had towards education. The latter put a premium on academic work, and were highly motivated. They regarded academic work as valuable for its own sake. On the other hand, the school-leavers had a more instrumental orientation, wishing to obtain a matriculation certificate because this meant **"getting a good job."** They were prepared to work hard, and also had **"fun"** in school. These two elements co-existed, and the latter did not supersede the former. Thus, the analysis in this study cannot support a simply dichotomy of conformity versus non-conformity. There was a much greater variety of student responses than is suggested by this kind of distinction. In many instances, the school-leavers in both grades combined the pursuits of wanting an education and **"enjoying life."**

Most ordinary grade students, and especially those from the tertiary education group found it easy to assimilate the values of the school system. They were adequately prepared for this. They were the ones who were questioned most often by their teachers, asked to participate in discussions, to demonstrate things and so on. They derived the greatest benefit from lessons, showed a clear understanding of what was discussed, were prepared to question their teachers, and to make contributions. Most of the working-class school-leavers, especially those from the practical grade found it difficult to respond in these ways. This, of course, did not mean that they accepted everything that their teachers said and did during lessons:

Some of the working-class school-leavers complained that certain teachers paid most attention to the "bright" ones and ignored them. For example, Jaylal, said.

"English lessons are very boring. The teacher carries on talking. Sometimes we almost fall asleep. One of the students reads from the book, and you just got to keep on following. It's mostly the bright students that get the opportunity. That's why we weak students don't care. So we just drop aside. We are harming ourselves. The whole class should be involved in the lesson."

#### 5.16 STUDENTS' INFORMAL CULTURE

Almost half the number of school-leavers, and a few tertiary education group students gave some account of this aspect of their lives. This category accounted for 3.83 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers, and 2.07 per cent for those from the tertiary education group. It also accounted for 4.74 per cent of the content for practical grade school-leavers, as against 2.34 per cent for those from the ordinary grade; 2.16 per cent for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, as against 7.48 per cent for those from Ridgemount. For the total sample of teachers, this category comprised 2 per cent of the content analysed.

There was hardly any evidence of a counter-school culture, except in the case of the practical grade at Ridgemount. Of course, there were instances of "playing the fool," "having

a laugh," and "messing about." Much of the humour in both practical and ordinary grade classes in both schools could be seen as a relief from hard work, and not as a replacement for it. Much of this humour was aimed at introducing an element of liveliness when lessons were boring, and was lived out in a variety of ways which constituted a part of the daily fabric of the life of the students.

For example, eating sandwiches or drinking juice while the lesson was in progress, without being caught was seen as an "act of adventure." Probationary teachers and those who were on teaching practice were "tried out." Students also "cracked jokes," and "pretended to aim things" in the teacher's direction while he wrote on the board. Some even tried to imitate their teachers' speech. These forms of behaviour cannot be described as "anti-school" in the sense in which Willis (1977), Hargreaves (1967), Jenkins (1983) and Corrigan (1979) use this term.

The closest resemblance to examples of counter-school culture in this study was displayed by the practical grade students at Ridgemount. For many of the boys in this class, part of the adventure of schooling was the flouting of authority. When the boys were on an excursion, the delights of "dancing," wearing their "outing clothes," "smoking," and "drinking" constituted their resistance to authority. These out of school influences on some of these school-leavers were evident in their behaviour in the classroom. The following accounts by David and Ruben provide some indication of this counter-culture.

David : "Most of the fun took place on the bus. It's a long journey and the boys kept themselves happy. They did their small time dance, and wore their outing clothes. These were straight pants and sixteen inch bottoms. They are also very particular about their shirts which must be buttoned down, and have a pleat at the back. They hoodwinked the teachers by taking drink onto the bus. The teachers are very hard on them, but most of the time, the students are cleverer. They like to take hot stuff. They use coke containers and smuggle the liquor into that. There is a black cap at the bottom of a two litre coke container. The boys pull that off, cut a hole and pour the drink through it. They then seal the cap back."



Ruben : "We had a nice time on the bus. The boys were drinking and smoking. Now and then, they got up to mischief. The teachers couldn't catch us. They don't know about our secret of how to smuggle liquor via coke bottles. We couldn't have had a better time. The boys wanted to show their friends how to do things and not get caught. We had the teachers covered all the way."

At times the students in this class found guidance lessons uninteresting. This was when they tried to annoy their teacher by engaging in private jokes and conversations. They also shuffled their desks, scraped their feet on the floor, and made unsavoury remarks about the teacher and the lessons. Some of their jokes had explicit sexual connotations.

#### 5.17 CONCLUSION

There were marked differences in the experiences of education, particularly between the tertiary education group on the one hand, and the school-leavers from the practical grade on the other. There were also differences between individuals within each of these groups. While some of these differences may be owing to differences in their attitudes towards education other factors, such as the internal organisational arrangement of the school system, the actions of teachers within that organisation and the students' cultural backgrounds have a part to play as well.

Most teachers in both schools were dedicated and did an exacting job. They could not be accused of deliberately oppressing the working-class school-leavers. On the contrary, they were very conscious of the need for educational reform, and providing equal opportunities. But the way in which the schools' policies of equal opportunity were translated into practice was an important factor in reproducing social and cultural inequalities which existed between students from the middle and working classes. We have seen, for example, how the classification and framing of knowledge sponsored the mobility of students from the tertiary education group. The selection, stratification and organisation of knowledge pointed to the relationships between knowledge, power and the reproduction of the social order.

The processing of knowledge, and the processing of students on the basis of the **"mental"** and the **"manual"** resulted in an over-representation of working-class students in the practical grade. In both schools, these processes were the result of the influences of teachers who had a tendency to view this social-class group in stereotypical terms, as having skills of the body rather than skills of the mind. By encouraging these **"practically-minded"** students to concentrate on manual jobs the teachers inadvertently reinforced the academic failure of these students. They also facilitated the reproduction of this social class as lower-status employees.

Another aspect of the reproduction process was the channelling of girls towards female subjects and jobs. Several girls in this study framed their educational and career aspirations in terms of sexual politics. The curriculum reflected and reproduced the sexual divisions of the home and the labour market. There are also indications of how the the students' apartheid education prepared them for entry into a racially-divided society and labour market.

Despite the professed aims of the schools of providing equal opportunities, the discrepancies between the different groups of students in this study point to schooling as a **"conservative force."** The policies, organisational arrangements, and the actions of teachers in both schools transmitted a culture which supported the established social order and the race, class and gender interests which dominate it. The differences in the experiences of the school-leavers and the tertiary education group, and between individuals in each of these groups, indicate how the school system favoured those with access to power and resources. By teaching different skills, values and dispositions to practical and ordinary grade students, and to boys and to girls, the schools helped to recreate the class structure with its attendant racial and sexual divisions.

But this reproduction did not occur automatically; nor did it take place behind the backs of the students. They were not just passive recipients of knowledge, values and dispositions which would lead them to their future positions in a stratified

labour market. The students based many of their decisions not only on the official messages of career-counselling, but on certain selective living principles derived from their own culture. They had continually to interpret and reinterpret the choices which confronted them in terms of their own culture. Such decisions were influenced by experiences in their families and neighbourhoods, the culture of their social class, school experiences and the various constraints which they had to face. It was through such cultural experiences that they were actually involved in choosing a career.

When looking at the culture of the students as an aspect of the reproduction process, it is also important to note that there were some school-leavers who through their own actions were placed in disadvantaged positions. These were the ones who were frequently absent from school and who did not take their school work seriously. This pattern of behaviour resulted in poor school performances, and had serious implications for their lack of success in gaining admission to tertiary education institutions or obtaining suitable employment.

However, despite some of their criticisms of the school, generally the students from both the practical and the ordinary grades recognised the value of education. They came from homes where there is a belief in education, hard work, and the importance of getting on in life. Many of the working-class school-leavers accepted these values as valid, even though their parents are not highly educated, and are generally ignorant of the functions of the school. This strong pro-school attitude stems from the Indian community's deep involvement and contribution to its own educational progress. As a minority group in a racially-divided society, the community looked towards education as one of the mechanisms for overcoming disadvantages. This probably explains why there was hardly any counter-school culture amongst the students in this study. However, while some of them wanted to **"have fun"** and had **"outside interests,"** they were also concerned about getting on with education. They were conformists in some respects and non-conformist in others.

Despite this general pro-school attitude, it was the students

from the ordinary grade who benefitted most. They stayed at school longer, acquired more qualifications, and regarded school more positively. The tertiary education group in particular found it easiest to assimilate the values of the school system. These students had the support of their parents and relatives who were **"knowledgeable"** about the school system, and the culture of the school supported their life-styles.

The varying patterns of adaptation to school of the different groups of students, and of different individuals in this study explain how social and cultural reproduction took place. Since some students adapted more easily and benefitted more, some of the real functions of the schools ran counter to their stated aims. These functions helped to maintain many of the cultural processes which took place and which contributed towards social reproduction. In many contradictory and unintended ways, both schools directed a vast proportion of working-class school-leavers towards lower-status jobs. These unseen forms of reproduction are linked in complex ways to the race, class, and gender divisions of the South African society, and to the requirements of the labour market.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. INTO WORK

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In analysing the school-leavers' experiences at work, this chapter looks particularly at how those from the lower and upper working classes were channelled towards dead-end, and short-term careers. The culture of work, and the school-leavers' cultural backgrounds are important considerations in this analysis of the reproduction of their social status. However, besides looking at these routine, repetitive, semi-skilled jobs, there is also an analysis of apprenticeships and lower-middle-class jobs which some of the other school-leavers obtained.

Despite some of the insights which these school-leavers showed into the contradictions which existed between school and work, and the unequal power relationships at work, many were still drawn into situations of compromise. The processes which highlighted this aspect of their transition into work were reflected through messages embedded within the organisation of work, the nature of work activities, the criteria used for recruitment, and the controls to which they were subjected. These and other relevant issues are added to the focus of attention in an attempt to explain how class, race and gender divisions are reproduced through work.

#### 6.2 COLLECTION OF DATA

##### 6.2.1 Details of School-Leavers who Obtained Employment

Data were collected in respect of twenty school-leavers. Table 6.1 (on page 325) gives various details about the school-leavers and the jobs which they obtained. They entered three broad types; namely, semi-skilled work, apprenticeships, and lower-middle-class jobs. This table shows that thirteen of the school-leavers were actually observed at work. The seven who could not be observed included Kesval from the ordinary grade at Ridge-mount whose firm refused permission to visit. The other six obtained work rather late and could not be observed by the time the fieldwork was concluded. Since they had not yet settled down to work, there was not much value in visiting their places of employment. In all of these cases where observations were not made, the school-leavers were visited at home.



TABLE 6.1

## SCHOOL-LEAVERS AND JOBS OBTAINED

NAME OF SCHOOL-LEAVER	SOCIAL CLASS	SEX	SCHOOL	GRADE	FIRST JOB	OWNER OF FIRM	OBSERVED OR NOT	SECOND JOB
<b>A. SEMI-SKILLED JOBS</b>								
1. Juggie	L.W.C.	M.	O.L.	ordinary	handyman	Indian	observed	packer
2. Perumal	L.W.C.	M.	O.L.	ordinary	pedestal assembler	White	not observed	
3. Lennie	L.W.C.	M.	O.L.	practical	despatcher	Indian	observed	packer
4. Logan	L.W.C.	M.	O.L.	practical	counterhand	Indian	observed	cleaner
5. Moonsamy	L.W.C.	M.	O.L.	practical	handyman	Indian	observed	
6. Asha	L.W.C.	F.	R.	practical	machinist	Indian	not observed	saleswoman
7. Pat	U.W.C.	M.	R.	practical	despatcher	White	not observed	
8. David	U.W.C.	M.	R.	practical	shank controller	White	not observed	sales-assistant
9. Ruben	U.W.C.	M.	R.	practical	switchboard operator	White	not observed	packer
<b>B. APPRENTICESHIPS</b>								
10. Prakash	L.M.C.	M.	O.L.	practical	motor mechanic	White	observed	
11. Nesan	L.M.C.	M.	O.L.	practical	cabinet-maker	White	observed	data processing clerk
12. John	U.W.C.	M.	O.L.	practical	shopfitter	White	observed	
<b>C. LOWER-MIDDLE-CLASS JOBS</b>								
13. Saras	L.W.C.	F.	O.L.	ordinary	typist	Indian	observed	
14. Champa	L.W.C.	F.	O.L.	ordinary	typist	Indian	observed	
15. Kesval	L.W.C.	M.	R.	ordinary	filing clerk	White	not observed	
16. Sagren	U.W.C.	M.	R.	ordinary	stock controller	White	observed	
17. Jaylal	U.W.C.	M.	O.L.	ordinary	coding clerk	Indian	observed	factory worker
18. Mayadevi	U.W.C.	F.	O.L.	practical	coding clerk	White	observed	
19. Sheila	U.W.C.	F.	R.	practical	assistant to secretary	White	observed	
20. Suraya	L.M.C.	F.	O.L.	ordinary	temporary school-teacher	State	not observed	

L.W.C. = lower working class

U.W.C. = upper working class

L.M.C. = lower middle class

O.L. = Orchard Lane

R. = Ridgemount

During the home visits, as much information as possible was obtained about work experiences. This indirect method of data collection lasted till the end of August 1984, the stage at which all fieldwork was terminated.

Eight school-leavers obtained second jobs, but once again the practical limits regarding the time set for data collection made it impossible to visit them at work. Information about work was obtained by visiting and interviewing them at home. Of this group, six found jobs in firms owned by Whites, and the other two were employed by Indian firms.

#### 6.2.2 Establishing Contact, and Sources of Data

Once it was established that some of the school-leavers had obtained employment, letters were written to their employers, explaining the purpose of the study and seeking permission to observe these people at work. Requests were also made to speak to senior employees who were knowledgeable about the school-leavers' adjustment to work. It was necessary to point out that I would not interfere with the routine procedures and practices of work, and that each visit would not last for more than one hour.

Gaining access to most of the firms was easy. There was only one refusal, and this was in the case of Kesval who was employed by a large textile company. Once permission was granted, arrangements were made to speak to managers or directors at the outset to find out something about the general policies of the firms concerning the employment of school-leavers. These discussions also enabled me to get some idea of the patterns of work activities in which these school-leavers were engaged, and to plan my future visits in such a way that I would be able to sample selectively a range of these activities.

The managers and directors were very co-operative, and some even explained to their supervisors, foremen and journeymen the purpose of the study, requesting them to assist me. In the case of the legal firm where Champa from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane was employed, I was allowed to visit, provided that I left the office and waited in the reception area whenever clients were involved in confidential discussions with the lawyer. I agreed to do so. The manager of Lennie's (practical



grade, Orchard Lane) firm was afraid that the workers in the factory would be curious about my presence and this would affect their concentration on work. I had to convince him that this "problem" was not too serious.

It was decided to make the first observational visit only after the school-leavers had settled into work. This was after they had been at work for three months. It was important to do this if reliable data were to be gathered about the worker's adjustment and the patterns of socialisation into work. The visits to each place of employment had to be arranged so that they were spread over approximately one month in order to sample a good range of work activities. This meant that visits had to be made at different times of the day and week to capture something of the actual rhythm of work. By using the technique of selective sampling it was possible to observe the changing nature of work activities. The school-leavers were seen in varying situations, and were busier during some periods than others.

Data were collected by means of observations in the workplace, interviews and discussions with directors, managers, supervisors, foremen, journeymen, and the school-leavers themselves. Table 6.2 (on page 328) gives an indication of the amounts of data collected via the various sources.

Category 1 in the table refers to field notes based on actual observations in the work situation. The field notes for each visit were based on approximately one hour of observation. Category 2 refers to tape recordings of incidents which took place during these visits. These included such things as discussions between workers, instructions and guidance given by supervisors and foremen, humour on the shopfloor, and so on.

Those who were observed at work were interviewed at least twice; while those who were unable to be observed were interviewed on approximately four occasions each.

TABLE 6.2

## SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF DATA COLLECTED

SOURCE	NUMBER OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS	APPROX. NO. OF OBSERVATIONS & AND RECORDING SESSIONS PER SCHOOL-LEAVER	APPROX. TIME PER SESSION IN MINUTES	TOTAL OBSERVATION/RECORDING TIME IN HOURS
1. Observations at work recorded in field notes	13	4	60	60
2. Tape recordings of incidents at work	13	4	20	19
3. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions with managers and directors	11	1	45	10
4. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions with supervisors and foremen	6	2	30	7
5. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions with journeymen	3	2	30	3
6. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions with school-leavers	20	3	40	43

A total time of approximately 142 hours was devoted to the collection of data from these various sources.

### 6.2.3 Observations, Discussions and Interviews

Before any visits were made to the firms, the school-leavers were visited at home to obtain some preliminary information about their jobs. This information was later compared with what they told me about work experiences during the final discussions held after all observations were completed. They were asked how they came to get these jobs; the activities involved in a typical day's work; difficulties experienced; adjustment to work; conditions at work; and their future occupational plans.

During the visits to places of employment, certain general observations were made about the physical environment; the hierarchical divisions amongst workers; racial and gender divisions in the labour market; the interaction between people at work; the nature of work activities; the adjustment to

the work situation; and the nature of control over workers. The activities which were recorded and on which notes were made were selected on the principles of theoretical and selective sampling (discussed in Chapter One of the present section). Time-sampling procedures could not be used because of the wide range of activities that had to be observed.

Where I was not clear or was uncertain about specific aspects of the kinds of jobs done by these school-leavers, I tried to find out about these aspects from journeymen, supervisors or other senior employees who sometimes accompanied me. Questions were posed on such specific issues as the requirements for a job; the school-leaver's ability to cope; difficulties experienced; the preparation of the jobseeker by the school; the school-leaver's chances of being promoted; the training programme; and so on.

In the case of each firm, when observations were concluded further discussions were conducted with managers, directors, foremen and supervisors. These revolved around the following issues: the means by which the school-leavers came to obtain their jobs; the specific nature of their work activities; educational qualifications and other requirements; training offered by the firms; the school-leavers' abilities to cope with these jobs; their attitude to work; relationships with their workmates and superiors; promotion opportunities; criteria used for recruitment of school-leavers; and the preparation of the school-leavers by schools.

The final interviews held with the school-leavers included several questions which were originally posed during preliminary discussions about work. In addition, there were other questions which were aimed at clarifying things which I had observed at work, and issues which managers, supervisors and others had raised. These helped to clear up any **"management of impressions"** that some of the school-leavers tried to create. In addition, I tried to find out about their reasons for choosing their jobs; how they felt about these choices; the jobs which they had in mind while they were in school; their relationships with workmates and superiors; their impressions of these people; the nature of training at work; and their future occupational plans.

In the case of the seven school-leavers who were unable to be observed a similar set of questions was posed, but particular attention was paid to finding out about the changing nature of work. Specific issues which they mentioned, and which were regularly followed up in discussions, were: the repetitive nature of work; the conditions at work; their understanding of work in a capitalist setting; their commitment or non-commitment to work; and their adjustment to or rejection of jobs. The specific questions designed for each school-leaver were built around these core issues. By the time the fourth and final discussion had taken place with each of these persons there emerged a comprehensive profile of the type of job done and the worker's perception of this job.

#### 6.2.4 Some Problems Encountered with Data Collection

Despite making every effort to explain the purpose of this study, and my own role in it, a few employers were suspicious of me. This suspicion could have affected the reliability of the information which they gave me, and the things that I was allowed or not allowed to observe. The senior director of the firm where Juggie from the practical grade at Orchard Lane was employed feared that I would **"pass on information"** to the workers' trade union. To make matters worse, some of Juggie's workmates believed that I was a trade union representative and that I was going to **"improve things"** at this firm. I had to clear up such misconceptions since future entry to the firm could be threatened. Nevertheless, these reactions of the director and the workers gave me some insight into the relationships between workers and management.

The management of the two clothing factories visited were also suspicious of me. Though I was given access, Lennie's manager was not too happy about a visitor observing the activities of his workers. He said that the firm's policy was not to allow visitors on the floor since information about **"new patterns of clothing"** could be passed on to rival companies. This was probably also the reason why I was not left unattended during visits to the factory where Sagren from the ordinary grade at Ridgemount worked. I was always accompanied by the manager or floor supervisor.

Permission to tape-record discussions was refused in only one case, that of Logan's (practical grade, Orchard Lane) first employer. Though this was **"out of the question,"** I was allowed to write **"field notes."** Immediately after the discussion, these notes were supplemented by much of what I could recall of my observations and impressions. Logan's second employer discouraged me from visiting his small jewellery shop, explaining that Logan **"was a casual, and not a registered worker."** However, he said that I could **"pop in if it is worth it."** When I did so, he was reluctant to talk about Logan's actual work, and spoke in general terms about his trade. He was afraid that I was an official from a government department, who had come to enquire about Logan's status as a worker. There was no point in carrying out any further visits, and information had to be obtained from the school-leaver outside of the work situation. It was difficult to establish the reliability of such data since Logan himself evaded many of my questions. Logan also did not want me to visit the firm since he was **"threatened"** with dismissal if I did so.

Though there was a flat refusal for permission to visit from the secretary of the firm where Kesval was employed, I tried to pursue the matter with the managing director. However, there was no success as indicated in his reply:

**"This is a big company and we have lots of requests from researchers to enter the firm. The situation reached such a stage that we found it difficult to control. Now we have a blanket ruling that no one is allowed to come into the firm to do any kind of research."**

Besides problems concerned with gaining access, and collecting information, there were also problems which had to do with employers' and the school-leavers' varying interpretations of my role. It was important not to lose their confidence in me, despite the fact that I could not satisfy fully all of their expectations. These persons were valuable sources of data if a comprehensive picture had to be constructed.

At least two employers tried to influence me to help them control the attitude and behaviour of **"difficult"** school-leavers. This was probably what they expected in return for allowing me to visit their firms. Juggie's employer suggested that instead of observing the school-leaver openly on the factory floor, that I observe secretly through a one-way screen in his office.

His explanation was that Juggie had to understand that the purpose of my visit was not to observe him, but rather to obtain a report from the manager about his attitude to work. Juggie had to be **"threatened"** if he was to **"avoid getting into trouble."** The journeyman at the firm where Moonsamy from the practical grade at Orchard Lane worked was also concerned about Moonsamy's attitude to work. He felt that together with the manager I should speak to Moonsamy about this.

It was difficult to satisfy such demands as I had to be careful not to offend these school-leavers who had trusted me all along. Much valuable information had yet to be obtained from them. I therefore tried to divert the attention of the manager and journeyman to other aspects in which they were interested. These included discussions on how schools could prepare new recruits for such jobs by building in them the **"correct attitudes."**

Some of the school-leavers also expected something in return for participating in this study. Lennie, for example wanted me to **"fix"** him a job as a traffic policeman. All that I could do was to take him to the traffic department's office and make enquiries. He clearly wasn't satisfied with this. Nesan, from the practical grade at Orchard Lane, wanted me to **"organise a place"** for him at university to study part-time. This was not possible since the practical grade standard-ten certificate is not recognised for admission to university.

### 6.3 ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data contained in the interviews, discussions and field notes on observations were classified according to an index system. The file of each school-leaver contained details about the experiences of work. A preliminary analysis of the content pointed to twelve broad categories, into which the main areas of content could be sorted. These were topics about work situations which were discussed by the school-leavers, and in some cases by their employers, supervisors, foremen, journeymen and others. These categories are listed in tables 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 (on pages 335 to 337).

The twelve categories were coded, and the profile of each school-leaver was carefully built up according to coded categories.



The procedure for tallying the frequencies (i.e. the number of occurrences with which each category appeared in the entire range of content that was analysed) is the same as that adopted in the analysis done in the two previous chapters.

References to particular categories were indicated by statements made by the school-leavers, their employers and through observational notes. Once again, the procedure for calculating the percentages of content analysed for the various categories is the same as that adopted in the previous chapters.

Here too, there were instances when the statements or references could be fitted into more than one category. For example, observations of the **"work environment"** and descriptions of **"the experience of work"** overlapped to some extent. When the school-leavers described their **"work environment,"** indirect references were sometimes made to **"racial"** and **"gender divisions."** References to **"qualifications for jobs," "criteria for recruitment,"** and **"reasons for choice of jobs"** also overlapped at certain times. Other categories which revealed this trend were **"the experience of work"** and **"reactions to work."** The method of examining each reference, and then deciding in which category to place it has already been outlined in Chapters Four and Five of Part Two. Extreme care was taken to code each reference accurately and to place it in its appropriate category. For this purpose it was important to make out the specific and general nature of the various statements. For example, when discussing their **"work environment,"** specific references to the physical, social and other conditions relating to the workplace were placed in this category. But when school-leavers or employers discussed matters such as race, gender, types of jobs and the experience of work within the context of **"work environment,"** such references were considered to be specific to these other categories and were coded accordingly. Since they referred only generally to **"work environment,"** it was inappropriate to classify them in that category.

However, merely categorising references, tallying frequencies, and analysing content according to categories may leave us with a distorted view of the school-leavers' perceptions of



the transition into work. The analysis which follows gives some indication of how these various categories were interrelated to give a global picture of the school-leavers' interpretation of work. By linking these various categories, it is possible to get some idea of how these youngsters constructed their realities under varying conditions of work.

TABLE 6.3

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE									ORDINARY GRADE									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Types of jobs	62	23.48	9	18	26.10	3	80	24.02	12	28	20.44	5	14	23.73	3	42	21.43	8	90	22.44	14	32	25.00	6	122	23.06	20
2. Work environment	23	8.71	9	7	10.14	2	30	9.01	11	15	10.95	5	6	10.17	2	21	10.71	7	38	9.48	14	13	10.16	4	51	9.64	18
3. Reasons for choice of jobs	12	4.55	7	3	4.35	1	15	4.50	8	8	5.84	5	4	6.78	3	12	6.12	8	20	4.99	12	7	5.47	4	27	5.10	16
4. Racial divisions	19	7.20	9	3	4.35	2	22	6.61	11	9	6.57	5	5	8.47	3	14	7.14	8	28	6.98	14	8	6.25	5	36	6.81	19
5. Gender divisions	12	4.55	8	3	4.35	3	15	4.50	11	6	4.38	4	3	5.08	2	9	4.59	6	18	4.49	12	6	4.69	5	24	4.54	17
6. Qualifications for jobs	17	6.44	9	4	5.80	3	21	6.31	12	3	2.19	3	0	0.0	0	3	1.53	3	20	4.99	12	4	3.13	3	24	4.54	15
7. Use of contacts	10	3.79	8	0	0.0	0	10	3.00	8	6	4.38	5	1	1.69	1	7	3.57	6	16	3.99	13	1	0.78	1	17	3.21	14
8. Criteria for recruitment	8	3.03	6	4	5.80	2	12	3.60	8	6	4.38	2	4	6.78	2	10	5.10	4	14	3.49	8	8	6.25	4	22	4.16	12
9. Control of workers	15	5.68	6	4	5.80	2	19	5.71	8	12	8.76	4	3	5.08	2	15	7.65	6	27	6.73	10	7	5.47	4	34	6.43	14
10. "Good" and "bad" workers	12	4.55	6	2	2.90	1	14	4.20	7	7	5.11	3	5	8.47	2	12	6.12	5	19	4.74	9	7	5.47	3	26	4.91	12
11. The experience of work	44	16.67	9	9	13.04	2	53	15.92	11	20	14.60	6	8	13.56	2	28	14.29	8	64	15.96	15	17	13.28	4	81	15.31	19
12. Reactions to work	30	11.36	9	12	17.39	3	42	12.61	12	17	12.41	6	6	10.17	2	23	11.73	8	47	11.72	15	18	14.06	5	65	12.29	20

TABLE 6.4

- CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT ORCHARD LANE

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE									ORDINARY GRADE									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Types of jobs	46	22.67	6	7	25.93	1	53	23.04	7	17	22.08	3	14	23.73	3	31	22.79	6	63	22.50	9	21	24.42	4	84	22.95	13
2. Work environment	19	9.36	6	4	14.81	1	23	10.00	7	8	10.39	3	6	10.17	2	14	10.29	5	27	9.64	9	10	11.63	3	37	10.10	12
3. Reasons for choice of jobs	9	4.43	6	0	0.0	0	9	3.91	6	5	6.49	3	4	6.78	3	9	6.62	6	14	5.00	9	4	4.65	3	18	4.92	12
4. Racial divisions	12	5.91	6	1	3.70	1	13	5.65	7	4	5.19	3	5	8.47	3	9	6.62	6	16	5.71	9	6	6.98	4	22	6.01	13
5. Gender divisions	9	4.43	6	1	3.70	1	10	4.35	7	4	5.19	3	3	5.08	2	7	5.15	5	13	4.64	9	4	4.65	3	17	4.64	12
6. Qualifications for jobs	11	5.42	6	2	7.41	0	13	5.65	7	2	2.60	2	0	0.0	0	2	1.47	2	13	4.64	8	2	2.33	1	15	4.10	9
7. Use of contacts	6	2.96	5	0	0.0	0	6	2.61	5	4	5.19	3	1	1.69	1	5	3.68	4	10	3.57	8	1	1.16	1	11	3.01	9
8. Criteria for recruitment	8	3.94	6	1	3.70	1	9	3.91	7	1	1.30	1	4	6.78	2	5	3.68	3	9	3.21	7	5	5.81	3	14	3.83	10
9. Control of workers	15	7.39	6	2	7.41	1	17	7.39	7	4	5.19	2	3	5.08	2	7	5.15	4	19	6.79	8	5	5.81	3	24	6.56	11
10. "Good" and "bad" workers	12	5.91	6	0	0.0	0	12	5.22	6	2	2.60	1	5	8.47	2	7	5.15	3	14	5.00	7	5	5.81	2	19	5.19	9
11. The experience of work	33	16.26	6	4	14.81	1	37	16.09	7	14	18.18	4	8	13.56	2	22	16.18	6	47	16.79	10	12	13.95	3	59	16.12	13
12. Reactions to work	23	11.33	6	5	18.52	1	28	12.17	7	12	15.58	4	6	10.17	2	18	13.24	6	35	12.50	10	11	12.79	3	46	12.57	13

TABLE 6.5

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT RIDGEMOUNT

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE									ORDINARY GRADE									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Types of jobs	16	26.22	3	11	26.19	2	27	26.21	5	11	18.33	2	0	0.0	0	11	18.33	2	27	22.31	5	11	26.19	2	38	23.31	7
2. Work environment	4	6.56	3	3	7.14	1	7	6.78	4	7	11.67	2	0	0.0	0	7	11.67	2	11	9.09	5	3	7.14	1	14	8.59	6
3. Reasons for choice of jobs	3	4.92	1	3	7.14	1	6	5.83	2	3	5.00	2	0	0.0	0	3	5.00	2	6	4.96	3	3	7.14	1	9	5.52	4
4. Racial divisions	7	11.48	3	2	4.76	1	9	8.74	4	5	8.33	2	0	0.0	0	5	8.33	2	12	9.92	5	2	4.76	1	14	8.59	6
5. Gender divisions	3	4.92	2	2	4.76	2	5	4.85	4	2	3.33	1	0	0.0	0	2	3.33	1	5	4.13	3	2	4.76	2	7	4.29	5
6. Qualifications for jobs	6	9.84	3	2	4.76	2	8	7.77	5	1	1.67	1	0	0.0	0	1	1.67	1	7	5.79	4	2	4.76	2	9	5.52	6
7. Use of contacts	4	6.56	3	0	0.0	0	4	3.88	3	2	3.33	2	0	0.0	0	2	3.33	2	6	4.96	5	0	0.0	0	6	3.68	5
8. Criteria for recruitment	0	0.0	0	3	7.14	1	3	2.91	1	5	8.33	1	0	0.0	0	5	8.33	1	5	4.13	1	3	7.14	1	8	4.91	2
9. Control of workers	0	0.0	0	2	4.76	1	2	1.94	1	8	13.33	2	0	0.0	0	8	13.33	2	8	6.61	2	2	4.76	1	10	6.13	3
10. "Good" and "bad" workers	0	0.0	0	2	4.76	1	2	1.94	1	5	8.33	2	0	0.0	0	5	8.33	2	5	4.13	2	2	4.76	1	7	4.29	3
11. The experience of work	11	18.03	3	5	11.90	1	16	15.53	4	6	10.00	2	0	0.0	0	6	10.00	2	17	14.05	5	5	11.90	1	22	13.50	6
12. Reactions to work	7	11.48	3	7	16.67	2	14	13.59	5	5	8.33	2	0	0.0	0	5	8.33	2	12	9.92	5	7	16.67	2	19	11.66	7

### 6.3.1 Controls over the Data

Several checks had to be placed on the reliability and validity of the data that had been collected and analysed. As in the case of the analysis in the previous chapters, this involved checking the inferences drawn from one set of data source with those derived from others. It included mainly the triangulation of data which were collected on the same phenomenon: during different phases of the fieldwork; from different respondents; and through the use of different methods. Consistencies and inconsistencies in the data were detected by matching responses which frequently occurred. This acted as a means of checking and cross-checking the data. These approaches are suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:198-99).

Data derived from the school-leavers, the employers, and through observations during visits to firms were compared regularly as they were derived during different phases of the fieldwork. For example, data collected from school-leavers during the preliminary discussions at home were compared with what they said about work during subsequent discussions, and at the end of visits to firms. Consistencies and inconsistencies were detected through triangulation of data collected at different points in the temporal cycle of these discussions and interviews. A similar approach was used when analysing the field notes on observations which were made at different points in time.

For example, the nature of the work activities described by the school-leavers during the discussions held at home tallied with much of what was observed during visits to their places of employment. These descriptions and observations were also corroborated by the details about the school-leavers' work activities as described by managers, supervisors, foremen, journeymen and so on. Despite the fact that I was unable to visit Kesval's firm, the information which he gave me during the several visits to his home was consistent. At various stages, I kept asking him similar questions about his job. On each occasion, there were hardly any discrepancies in what he said. A discussion with his supervisor at the latter's home also confirmed that the information supplied by Kesval was reliable.

When I felt that information was being deliberately withheld, I tried to obtain it indirectly during interviews with managers and supervisors at a later stage. I was able to corroborate evidence from different sources to get at what was concealed. In the case of Logan, for example, several inconsistencies were detected. While he told me that his second job involved a skilled trade, discussions with his employer revealed that this was not so. Logan was unable to tell me what this skilled work involved. What made it even more difficult to establish the truth of this matter was the fact that I was not able to observe him in this work situation. The best that could be done was to question Logan closely on several occasions about his activities at work. Cross-checks from one situation to the next revealed several discrepancies. Thus, his information was considered to be unreliable.

Data were also checked through constant questioning and cross-questioning of employers and school-leavers on the various things they said about each other, and of the policies and conditions relating to work. They were told about each other's views and asked to comment. For example, school-leavers were asked to comment on the approaches and techniques which employers used for recruitment and rating of workers; while employers' feelings were tapped about school-leavers' opposition to their policies. In addition, my own interpretations were also added. The data were not taken at face value, but included scrutiny from each participant's point of view.

John, (practical grade, Orchard Lane) Logan and Moonsamy were quite perturbed that their employers had given me unfavourable reports about their attitude to work. Their own versions contradicted much of what their employers had told me. However, in the case of Juggie, discussions during a visit to his home with his father and elder brother served to confirm what his employer had told me about him. Judging from Moonsamy's declining interest in his job, I also had reason to believe that his employer had described his attitude correctly. Logan, of course, tried to mislead me on several occasions, mainly by trying to convince me about how "unfair" and "grudging" his employers were. However, when I compared what his first and second employers said about him, there seemed to be much agreement in their views.

Data which appeared to be consistent were concerned with things like conditions at work, criteria for recruitment, the use of contacts, and the experiences at work. For example, some students told me that they had obtained work through the use of contacts. This was confirmed by their employers during the discussions which I had with them. Managers and supervisors also confirmed what several school-leavers told me about the educational qualifications required for certain jobs, and the social criteria which were used for judging new recruits. In several cases, the foremen's, journeymen's and supervisors' accounts of the school-leavers' adjustment to work were similar to the information given by directors and managers. And when I questioned these persons about several things that I had observed - such as the place of work, the rates of production, the methods of control and so on - their accounts were very similar.

#### 6.4 TYPES OF JOBS

Of the twenty-five school-leavers, twenty succeeded in getting jobs. The various stages at which they left school and entered work, and other details of this group have already been outlined in Chapter Two of the present section. Table 6.6 indicates the numbers of students from the two schools, and from the practical and ordinary grades, who entered the different categories of jobs. This table also indicates distribution according to sex. This category accounted for 23.06 per cent of the content analysed for all school-leavers.

TABLE 6.6

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS IN VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF JOBS

CATEGORIES OF JOBS	RIDGEMOUNT				ORCHARD LANE				TOTALS	
	ORDINARY		PRACTICAL		ORDINARY		PRACTICAL			
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
1. Semi-skilled	0	0	3	1	2	0	3	0	8	1
2. Apprenticeships	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0
3. Lower-middle class	2	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	3	5



The kinds of jobs taken up by these school-leavers reflect the division of work according to status. The differences between the three categories of jobs are evident in terms of qualification requirements, pay, and the kinds of training offered in each.

#### 6.4.1 Semi-Skilled Jobs

The semi-skilled jobs requiring the lowest qualifications, offered low pay and provided informal and unsophisticated training. These are similar to the careerless jobs discussed by Ashton and Field (1976). Most of these school-leavers learnt what was required of them within a day or two. They had to follow the instructions of supervisors and had to learn from other workers whom they observed. Usually the minimum qualification needed for these jobs was standards six to eight. These workers earned anything between twenty-five to seventy rands per week.

Some ideas of the low qualifications required for these jobs can be obtained from the following remarks of employers. For example, one of the managers said that a packer and despatcher earns twenty-seven rands a week, and that no formal training is required for this job. It can be learnt by observing others at work. Logan was a counterhand at a video-hiring shop, and his manager said:

"He hires and accepts films and recorders which are returned. He also handles queries about the quality of these films and machines. He also takes orders on the phone, and keeps count of the number of cassettes on the shelves etc. Not much education is required to do this job. Standard six is good enough. The person just has to know how to read, write and recognise video-cassettes."

The semi-skilled work in the secondary labour market required few skills, and these were of a relatively low level. The work was also of a casual and repetitive nature. They also involved standardised, routine, repetitive, concrete, and meaningless activities. There was not much motivation for intrinsic satisfaction. For example, handymen had to collect and clean tools and machinery, keep the workplace clean and assist qualified workers with certain minor tasks. These tasks included some basic welding, cutting, machining and so on. Despatchers and assemblers had to stack, pack and sort out goods according to size, colours, and code numbers.

A description of some of the activities involved in these jobs illustrates some of the points mentioned above. One of the packers and despatchers had to **"pack goods into boxes and strap these."** He also entered details of the goods on to forms, and submitted these to his supervisor. Another school-leaver learnt his job by watching others **"on the floor."** He had to check the contents of boxes containing various kinds of light fittings. He also had to write codes on the items, and on the boxes which he had to seal.

Moonsamy's job as a handyman was described by his journeyman as follows:

**"He does things like fitting covers over seats; but I won't let him machine seat covers. He will only fetch the material from the stores for me. After he clocks his card in the morning, he cleans and oils the machine. Then he sweeps the area where I work."**

#### 6.4.2 Apprenticeships

The minimum qualification for the apprenticeships was standard eight, and once again there was no insistence on grade. However, the training requirements were more stringent and formal than those of the semi-skilled jobs. Initial training courses of between three weeks to two months were offered at training schools. During the course of the year they were sent to technikon to attend in-service courses for three months at the company's expense.

Prakash from the practical grade at Orchard Lane, for example, spent three weeks at the company's training workshop, and later three months during each of the following three years at the technikon studying for the National Technical Certificate. Nesan spent three weeks at the Furniture Training Board where he had to take a qualifying trade test. John had to spend thirteen weeks at a course run for apprentice shopfitters by the Building Industry Federation of South Africa. In the next three years, he like Prakash, spent three months during each year at the technikon, studying for the National Technical Certificate.

Amongst other things, the apprentices had to study mathematics, science, engineering or technical drawing, and theory and practice related to their specific jobs. In the work situations, they were placed in the care of journeymen. They earned between

ninety to one hundred rands per week. According to Ashton and Field's (1976) classification, these jobs belong to the category "short-term careers."

The apprentices needed higher levels of skills, and their jobs offered greater permanency. For example, Prakash serviced and repaired cars, while Nesan manufactured furniture units and cabinets. John had to use his skills to make shop counters and display units. Specialised equipment such as sanding machines, saws, and engine tune-up kits were used.

#### 6.4.3 Lower-Middle-Class Jobs

The basic educational qualification for the lower middle-class jobs was standard ten, but here again employers did not worry whether this was taken at the practical or ordinary grade. In some cases, they were prepared to accept people with standard eight or nine. There was a general acknowledgement that people with lower qualifications could manage this type of work. The training given in the work situation was informal and lasted from two to three weeks. The workers in this category earned approximately 230 rands per month. Overall they earned less than the apprentices, and little more than the semi-skilled workers. These jobs, too, may be regarded as short-term careers.

Though the lower-level clerical and secretarial, lower-middle-class jobs were also somewhat routine in nature, there were at least some opportunities for advancement. Basically, the school-leavers were involved in typing, filing, coding, and recording of orders. In some cases, they also had to operate telex machines, take stock, and do reception work. These tasks required elementary mental skills. To some extent even these jobs involved fragmented tasks, indicated by the number of unrelated duties given to typists and clerks.

The fragmented nature of work can be seen in the case of one of the girls who was employed as a typist, but also had to operate the telex machine. In addition, she was required to assist with stocktaking. Sagren, who was employed as a bundle chaser or stock controller, had to perform some very routine tasks. This can be seen in the following descriptions of his job.

Sagren's floor supervisor : "He is responsible for controlling the line. If the line has about thirty machine operators, the function of the bundle chaser is to see that there is sufficient work flow at all times during the day. He also has to issue score sheets to every operator. He has to record the hourly scores of every operator. These are then taken to the computer room where they are processed. In this way the efficiency and performance of the operators are controlled."

Sagren's works training manager : "This is a very routine job. He has to do the same things over and over again. It takes about two weeks to learn the job. Within a month, a person doing this job can manage without supervision. Within three months, he should be able to function at one hundred per cent level."

Mayadevi from the practical grade at Orchard Lane, employed as a coding clerk, and Sheila from the practical grade at Ridgemount, as an assistant secretary were also involved in routine, fragmented jobs requiring elementary, mental skills. The following extracts indicate the nature of their work activities.

Mayadevi : "I date the orders which come in, and also make out payment and credit vouchers. These are taken to the senior clerk to be signed. Once I've finished that, I then do filing. I also open the letters, sort out statements, invoices, and branch orders according to the coding systems. This work takes place in this office, but on Saturdays the other girls and I are taken to various branches of this firm to help with stocktaking. We check the various shelves and note the items."

Sheila's sales director : "She checks incoming orders from our salesmen. She notes all these details in a special file. She also distributes mail for the secretary to the various departments; does most of the photocopying; distributes stationery to the salesmen. Her role is very much a co-ordinating one. When she has a day off we miss her badly."

## 6.5 WORK ENVIRONMENT

Data about the physical and social characteristics of the work environment of the three types of jobs were analysed for almost the entire group. This category accounted for 9.64 per cent of the content analysed for all school-leavers. As far as the two schools were concerned, it made up 10.10 per cent of content analysed for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, as against 8.59 per cent for those from Ridgemount.

The technical division of labour in semi-skilled jobs and apprenticeships revealed how work was broken down into a number of small tasks, each undertaken by different workers. For example, specific aspects of despatching, packing, coding, welding, pressing, cutting and so on were done by single workers over and over again. This arrangement made it impossible for them to see how their tasks fitted into the overall pattern of the process of production of goods. All that was required was that they should speed up their activities. In the factory where Juggie worked as a handyman to a welder, several workers were given various tasks related to building coaches. Some constructed frames, others welded, spray painted, and so on. In Prakash's firm, each mechanic had to perform separate tasks in the servicing of cars. These tasks included setting the carburettor, timing, balancing wheels and so on.

Several of the supervisors and foremen of semi-skilled labourers openly admitted that these are dead-end, careerless jobs. They commented on the low educational requirements, the simple tasks involved, the lack of opportunities for promotion, and the frequency with which jobs are changed within this sector of the secondary labour market.

Both the semi-skilled work and apprenticeships were undertaken in untidy, noisy and risky conditions. These specific experiential conditions were typical of these working environments. In the factories, there was the constant noise of machines, hammering, blowing, sawing, cutting and drilling. Workers occasionally called out to each other, shouted instructions, swore, quarrelled and sometimes whistled and sang. Frequent announcements were also made over the loud speaker system in some factories. In one factory the workers listened to pop music during work. The main reality for these people was work, and the noisy conditions under which work was produced. This is a striking feature of manual work in modern industrial culture.

There was also much noise in non-factory surroundings, as for example, in the small video-hiring shop where Logan worked. The music from the sound tracks of videos was heard all day long. People who walked past the shop spoke loudly, and noise was also created by Logan and his workers who shared jokes with each other. They also joked with some customers whom they knew intimately.



The dangerous and risky nature of these jobs were also evident in the kinds of tools and machinery used. Notices on the factory walls warned workers about the dangers of injury, and advised them to take precautions such as wearing protective headgear and masks. In several instances, the untidy surroundings of work could be seen through the conditions of dust, waste material, grease, oil and dirt. I had occasion to visit the rest rooms of some factories, where workers left their coats, jackets, and lunch-boxes. The floors were dirty, and the few steel tables provided were old, greasy and untidy. On the stairways there was a lot of waste material lying around. There were also empty cardboard boxes, tins and other containers. Though several of the school-leavers worked in factories which had large floor spaces, their own activities were confined to small areas where their work-benches or machines were placed.

In contrast to the semi-skilled jobs and apprenticeships, the lower-middle-class jobs were located in cleaner, quieter and safer conditions. These school-leavers were accommodated in large open offices, and in a few instances were given their own offices. They sat at desks, and had filing cabinets and units for storing paper and other material. The usual noises heard in these environments were the sounds of typewriters, calculators, flipping of papers, telephone conversations, and sometimes soft music. Though filing and coding clerks were grouped together in large open office areas, they nevertheless worked independently, and hardly engaged in casual conversations.

Two offices were particularly neat and attractive. One was carpeted, and had sunfilter curtains, and comfortable settees. There were also framed pictures on the walls. The other was also neatly furnished, and curtained. Soft music was provided through an intercom system.

#### 6.6 REASONS FOR CHOICE OF JOBS

This category contained data for sixteen of the school-leavers, and accounted for 5.10 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers. It also made up 6.12 per cent of content analysed for school-leavers from the ordinary grade, as opposed to 4.50 per cent for those from the practical grade.

The majority of these school-leavers, especially those who entered semi-skilled jobs, had no real intention of **"choosing"** such jobs. As in the case of Roberts (1975; 1984), in the present study, too, choice and personal preference did not feature prominently in explaining the entry into work. This was especially evident when the jobs taken by the school-leavers were compared with what their parents wanted them to do, and what the school-leavers themselves had in mind. Most parents, irrespective of class, wanted their children to get jobs which provided security, **"good money,"** and opportunities for promotion. When they were in school, the students themselves expressed similar views. The boys from the lower working class, for example, wanted to get into skilled trades, while the girls preferred clerical and secretarial jobs. Both the parents and the children were anxious to uplift themselves from conditions of poverty, and to improve their chances in life. These interpretations were located within Indian culture.

Thus, the school-leavers' decisions to enter their present jobs contrasted sharply with what they had in mind. Because of the constraints of the labour market, they had to accept uninteresting and dead-end jobs. These choices can also be explained in terms of how they perceived and interpreted the material and financial circumstances of their families. For example, some said that they were forced to leave school early to supplement the family's income, to accept whatever was suitable. It was factors such as these, rather than the middle-class construct of **"particular job choice"**, which had drawn these lower-working-class school-leavers towards a future, of generalised labour. Perumal's (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane), Moonsamy's, and Lennie's accounts of how they **"chose"** their jobs illustrate this point:

Perumal : "I didn't really choose this job. I was forced to take it because I was unemployed. This job is different to what I wanted to do. While at school, I wanted to become an electrician. I was unemployed for so long that when this job came up, I had to take it. It wasn't much of a choice. If a better job was available, I would have taken it."



Moonsamy : "If I had the finance I would have gone to the technikon to take a course in boilermaking. When my family was forced to shift from Duffield to Northflats things became hard. There were increased bus fares, rent, and electricity and water accounts to meet. In Duffield, it didn't cost so much."

Lennie : "When I left school I didn't know what I was going to do. I went looking for a job and got this one. So I took it."

Those who entered lower-level clerical, middle-class jobs also referred to similar circumstances which placed restrictions on their choices. For example, those who wished to become teachers, bank tellers, and social workers, but could not afford further studies had to lower their aspirations. They were prepared to accept "temporary" and "unattractive" jobs and to try to obtain better positions once conditions in the labour market improved. The following extracts indicate some of the factors which placed restrictions on these students' choices.

Saras (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) : "I couldn't afford to go to the technikon to study computer programming since my father wasn't working. So I had to accept this job which I got. I hope to get something better. Till then I will have to remain in this job."

Kesval : "I was forced to take this job due to the financial position at home. Now I regret going into a job like this. I hope to get a job with a better salary."

By contrast, the decision of two apprentices, Prakash and John seemed to be more in line with what is implied by choice. They felt that "having a trade" was important since it offered security, and some opportunity for advancement. They were influenced into thinking along these lines as soon as they realised how difficult it was to get "good jobs," and after talking to others who left school before them and who were still unemployed. However, while these apprentices were in school, they had loftier ambitions. Prakash, for example, wanted to be an architect, while Nesan wanted to be a doctor. They soon realised that these were unrealistic ambitions for practical grade students. Prakash changed his mind and left school before completing standard ten, and felt that it was important to get into a trade early since the educational requirement for entry was only standard eight. Like John, he expressed the view that attempting standard ten would have meant an unnecessary delay. This was not advisable in the face of rising unemployment.

The choice of jobs was clearly not a straightforward matter. It embodied contradictions, reversals and compromises: all of which are relevant to an explanation of why these school-leavers had contributed indirectly to the perpetuation of their group's inferior position in the labour market. Although some lower-and upper-working-class school-leavers entered apprenticeships and lower-middle-class jobs, several of the other working-class school-leavers landed jobs similar to those of their parents, and had to work under conditions that encouraged the construction of short-term visions. This indicates how the labour market is involved in the reproduction process.

#### 6.7 RACIAL DIVISIONS

Jobs at all three levels were characterised by racial divisions. The semi-skilled jobs are those which are traditionally reserved for Indians and Coloureds, as revealed in the discussion in Chapter Three of Part One on occupational patterns in South Africa. During visits to firms, very few Africans or Whites were seen doing these jobs. Africans were employed mainly as unskilled labourers, assisting the semi-skilled and skilled Indian and Coloured workers. This racial division of labour was seen in firms owned by Whites and Indians.

Data concerning this aspect of the school-leavers' jobs constituted 6.81 per cent of the content analysed for the entire sample, and 8.59 per cent of content for those from Ridgemoor. For school-leavers from Orchard Lane, it made up 6.01 per cent of the content.

In the eleven White-owned firms, the managerial and senior supervisory positions were held by Whites. In six of these firms, Indians were employed as foremen or senior clerks. The skilled and semi-skilled jobs were done mainly by Indians and Coloureds, and in a few cases Whites were also employed in the skilled trades. Those who did the lower-level jobs were mainly Africans, though in a few cases Indians were also seen doing such jobs. The lower-level clerical and trade jobs may be considered to be those usually reserved for Indians.

Clear racial divisions were also observed in the eight Indian-owned firms. The directors, managers, and senior supervisors

in all firms, except one, were Indians. In one of these firms there was a White sub-manager and a few White females employed as designers.

In the other firms, there were mainly Indians and a few Coloureds employed as machinists, welders, panel-beaters and upholsterers. Here too, as in the case of the White-owned firms, Africans were unskilled labourers like cleaners and handymen. In an Indian-owned legal firm, there were two Indian typists. The messengers and filing clerks, and office cleaners were Africans. Two of the school-leavers worked for small firms in which their fellow workers were all Indians.

These divisions in both Indian - and White-owned firms give some indication of the position of the Indian workers in relationship to members of other race groups. Clearly, in the White-owned firms Indians are subservient to Whites who are in managerial and other higher-level positions. Indian workers are also isolated from the bulk of African workers who are at a lower level. In terms of the racial hierarchy of the labour market, the school-leavers in this study, occupy an intermediate position.

Though apprenticeships in the shopfitting and cabinet-making industries are now open to all races, very few White apprentices were seen doing these jobs. The supervisors and foremen of the firms where John and Nesan were employed indicated that while increasing numbers of Indians and Coloureds are entering these trades, Whites are now moving into higher-status jobs. Whites were previously sheltered in these jobs through legal job reservation. This observation also applied to junior secretarial jobs which were previously occupied mainly by White females, but are now being increasingly filled by Indian females. Trends such as these consolidated the existing racial divisions in the labour market. The supervisor of the firm where Mayadevi was employed as a junior clerk described this situation as follows:

"We don't have any Whites doing the job that Mayadevi does. Some time ago we did. Whites are now employed in the middle and higher-clerical levels. It is mainly Indian females who do this job, and a few Indian males. The White females are personal secretaries to the manager, and the stock manager."

Two of these school-leavers, Prakash and Kesval were quite forthright in their comments about what they perceived to be race discrimination at work.

Prakash : "A White mechanic just started work, and he has been promoted to foreman. There is an Indian who has worked longer and with more qualifications but he was not considered. There's still some discrimination in this firm. However, there's a lot of scope for Indians in the motor trade, though the White man still has more say. My uncle has just become the manager of one of the branches of this company. Opportunities are coming slowly."

Kesval : "For much of the time there is discrimination against Indians. For example, in this firm Indians are not allowed to use the canteen as freely as Whites. The director said that Indians can use the canteen at certain times only, but Whites can use it at any time. The workers had to accept this."

Sheila, on the other hand, felt that there was no discrimination where she worked, and that she had no problems in relating to Whites who worked with her. She said:

"I have not come across any instance of race discrimination at work. I don't think being an Indian has affected me in my job. I'm the only Indian in my department, and I have lunch and tea with the Whites, and sometimes I go out with them. Many Indian girls who work in the other departments think that I regard myself as a White, but they are getting the wrong impression. I've got a very close relationship with the Whites. I work with the sales manager, the district manager, the secretary and so on, and we get on so fine. Of course, you will find some Whites, like any other people, who are also stubborn."

#### 6.8 GENDER DIVISIONS

This category accounted for 4.54 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers. The gender divisions of labour were clearly visible in the kinds of work done by men and women. In the factories, the packers, despatchers, assemblers, supervisors and journeymen were males. The machinists in clothing factories were almost exclusively females. Sagren's manager described this situation as follows:

"In the clothing industry, you find that most of the senior staff is male. The rest of the staff is mainly female. Very seldom will you see a male machinist. The only males in Sagren's set are his supervisor, and a few pressers. The rest are all females."

The managers and directors of all the firms were males, while the typists, filing and coding clerks, and secretaries were mainly females. The supervisors of females were usually males in senior positions. The apprentices were all males.

While females did not find it difficult to find jobs in the lower-clerical and secretarial fields, some employers had reservations about employing women, or promoting them to higher positions. For example, the manager of the firm where Saras worked felt that Indian women are not career-orientated; while the manager of the firm which employed Sagren did not see women as fit for supervisory positions. He was even prepared to accept lower qualifications when recruiting women. Their views appear below.

Saras's Manager : "Indian girls are not career-orientated.

They put marriage before a career. From the time they leave school, they allow for a three or four year gap before they get married. Once married, very few return to work. And those who do return will have to start training all over again."

Sagren's Manager : "We employ females as bundle chasers (stock controllers). But they will not be promoted to the supervisory positions of production trainee. The human race has accepted the fact that females can do monotonous jobs better than males. Males lose interest. We've got females who've been doing this job for six or seven years, and they don't want to do anything else. We actually selected a few to be trained as supervisors. They didn't do too well. But those who did do well wanted to stay as bundle chasers. They didn't want to become chargehands or supervisors. We only train men as production trainees. For men, we take only matriculants, but not so in the case of females. They require only standard eight. If she can read and write, and is reasonably sensible, that will do. They will not be future production trainees."

Saras's employer also made it clear that some of the jobs in his firm, at present occupied by females would be offered to males when jobs become scarce. He said:

"Much depends on the economic situation. When there's a depression, a lot of boys come looking for jobs which are now done by girls. When there's no depression, they go elsewhere looking for better jobs."

Views such as these led to the adoption of policies that perpetuated the division of labour according to gender.



## 6.9 QUALIFICATIONS FOR JOBS

Data in respect of this category were analysed for fifteen school-leavers, and this accounted for 4.54 per cent of the total content analysed for the whole group. While it constituted 6.31 per cent of the content analysed for practical grade school-leavers, it made up 1.53 per cent for that of the ordinary grade. When the two schools were compared, this category constituted 5.52 per cent of the content analysed for school-leavers from Ridgemount, as opposed to 4.10 per cent for those from Orchard Lane.

It did not take long for those in semi-skilled jobs to realise that educational qualifications beyond standard five or six were not really necessary for these jobs. Five of the school-leavers specifically mentioned that ordinary grade certificates were not relevant to this sector of the labour market. Some of their views appear below.

David (practical grade, Ridgemount) : "They didn't ask me whether I had a practical grade matric certificate or not. In fact, they didn't want someone who is qualified. They just wanted someone to assist, and they were willing to teach them what to do. They didn't want any qualifications."

Pat (practical grade, Ridgemount) : "If you had only standard six, you could have managed this job of mine. But they wanted someone with standard eight. They did not worry whether it was a practical or ordinary grade certificate."

Once they got into these semi-skilled jobs, many of the school-leavers began to feel that the school misled them by placing so much emphasis on qualifications. In a sense they felt that they had been cheated into striving for qualifications which had little value on the labour market. These doubts became even more glaring when one considers the deep beliefs that Indian parents generally have in educational and trade qualifications. The ideology of the macro society concerning qualifications coincides with the beliefs which the Indian community has in education, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four in Part One. Given this aspect of the cultural background of the school-leavers, one is in a position to understand some of the tensions and struggles which they experienced, especially in the secondary labour market. There were all kinds of doubts, reversals and reformulations of opinions concerning the relevance of qualifications.

Despite this experience, some of these school-leavers saw the importance of the need to improve their qualifications if they wished to get better jobs. But they were not very clear about which specific qualifications they were after, or how they would go about obtaining these. While they were quick to detect the irrelevance of qualifications for lower-status jobs, they were equally quick to realise that it was the lack of adequate qualifications which prevented them from getting "better" jobs. They classified these jobs within the "mental" dimension. Lennie, for example, said that if he were to advise students who contemplated leaving school to seek employment, he would encourage them to complete their matriculation first:

"I'll tell them of my problems, of how hard it is to get a job. Many firms now want matriculated pupils. If I had matric, I wouldn't have taken this job as a packer. I would have looked for better jobs, for example, in the bank, or a clerk in a shipping company. There's more money, and there's paper work. You work with books, and you won't have a boss behind you all the time."

Of course, there were others who had no intention of furthering their studies. All that they looked forward to were better-paid jobs. This attitude probably stemmed from their disappointment in not being able to find suitable jobs, despite having been to secondary school.

Paper qualifications assumed greater importance for entry into apprenticeships and the lower-level clerical and secretarial jobs. In some cases, standard eight was the minimum qualification for apprenticeships; in others it was standard seven. The employers, however, did not distinguish between practical and ordinary grade certificates. Statements made by these employers indicate the importance which they attached to qualifications. For example, one of the managers said:

"The minimum qualification to become an apprentice motor mechanic is standard eight. Then they have to study for the National Technical Certificate. Salaries are paid according to qualifications. A matriculant will automatically start with a higher salary. If in addition he has a technical qualification, he will get even more."

For most of the clerical and secretarial jobs standard ten was considered to be the basic requirement. In some instances, employers insisted on matriculation; in others they were prepared



to accept standard eight or nine. In a few cases, employers checked references and testimonials, and good symbols in typing and English helped to secure positions which demanded the ability to communicate. However, as in the case of apprenticeships, employers were not particular whether school-leavers had ordinary or practical grade certificates.

Those who insisted on matriculation as the entry requirement included the following:

Champa's employer : "We needed a matriculant who has typing experience. This was the only requirement. Even if she had a practical grade matric, with a good symbol in typing, and fared well in the typing test I gave her, I would have employed her."

Mayadevi's supervisor : "Matriculation is necessary for this job which may appear to be very simple and without much responsibility. However, we do not make a distinction between ordinary and practical grades. We do not even expect the person to have any sort of competence in commerce. We employ the person, and gradually phase her into the job."

Employers who preferred matriculants, but were prepared to accept lower qualifications included:

Kesval's supervisor : "Though we want matriculants, those with Senior Certificates, or who have failed matric are also employed. If someone has matric, and is quite bright, we give him a promotion. Those without matric may find the job difficult, but they can learn by watching others doing it."

Sheila's manager : "We look for someone who has matriculated. But if we come across a person with a good standard eight and a good clerical background, we employ that person."

It was only with this category of workers that a few employers attached some importance to qualifications as a screening device. Those who insisted on matriculation saw this certificate as an indicator of general, as well as specific abilities for some of these jobs. The comments of one of the managers indicate the kind of ability which he associated with qualifications:

"I mainly look to see if he's done maths. Kids who skip maths are usually the ones who go in more for parrot fashion learning. Maths is for somebody who can think. And here we need people who can think because when they get into a spot, there's no one whom they can turn to. They have to make the decisions themselves."

Contrary to such views, some of the school-leavers who obtained lower-middle-class jobs also expressed doubts about the relevance of qualifications. The fact that employers did not accord a higher status to ordinary grade certificates, and no distinction was made between good and bad symbols in school subjects led many of these school-leavers to question the ideology on which schooling was based. For example, Sheila said:

"I wouldn't say that I'm glad that I left school in standard eight. If I had continued till standard ten it would have been difficult to get a job, especially with the present unemployment. Of course, I would have benefitted by getting more education, but this wouldn't have got me the job which I now have. I have friends who have completed matric, but they are out of work. A friend of mine who has a Senior Certificate earns less than me. So I think I am fortunate in that respect. I had to leave school because of financial problems at home."

Career-guidance lessons stressed the importance of striving for good symbols, and equated ordinary and practical grades with mental and manual work respectively. However, the entry into jobs presented a different picture.

Despite having such doubts, when compared with the school-leavers in semi-skilled jobs those in apprenticeships and lower-middle-class jobs were clearer about the need for **"further study"** and improved qualifications. While Prakash was adamant that matriculation was not relevant to his job, he was keen to obtain qualifications in technical education. He felt that by obtaining **"as much trade qualifications as possible,"** he could eventually become a lecturer in motor mechanics at the technikon. John was anxious to obtain similar qualifications so that he could become a fully qualified tradesman. Nesan had loftier ambitions. He was keen to enrol **"for a course in computer study"** at the technikon, and then embark upon **"something better."**

Several in the lower-middle-class category also frequently mentioned that they wished to do **"computer studies"** at the technikon. According to Saras, for example, **"computer study can broaden your knowledge, and as the years go by the computer will become a very essential thing in our lives."**

Sagren was dissatisfied that he had to abandon his studies because of **"financial problems at home,"** and expressed the wish to study for a degree on a part-time basis:

"I like to study for the B.Com. degree because I want to make something of my life, rather than sticking around in a job such as this. I am sure that a higher level of education will help me to get a good job in the accountancy field."

#### 6.10 USE OF CONTACTS /

Though the majority of the school-leavers followed the advice given in guidance lessons to apply for jobs by replying to advertisements in newspapers, and by visiting firms, many found that this did not bring much success. As a result, they sought other ways such as using contacts. Fourteen school-leavers discussed this as one of the means of getting a job, and this category accounted for 3.21 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers. They spoke of contacts such as relatives, friends and neighbours.

At least four school-leavers got jobs through relatives. The father of one of the boys knew one of the directors of a coach-building firm, and spoke to him about a job for his son. Another boy's father found him a job in a firm which belonged to the company for which he worked. Several other members of his family were employed by this company. The uncle of one of these school-leavers asked a friend of his whose father was the foreman of a textile company to find his nephew a job. The fourth boy was employed in a bookshop which was owned by one of his relatives who knew that he was unemployed, and offered him the job.

Seven school-leavers managed to get jobs through friends who spoke on their behalf to managers, supervisors or foremen of various firms. These friends were employed in the same firms. Lennie, for example, got his second job as a packer because of a "friend who spoke to the foreman." Ruben (practical grade, Ridgemount) got a job as a packer in an electrical light-fitting firm through "a friend who referred" him "to the boss." A friend of Champa's "who works for another lawyer" found her a job as a typist for a legal firm.

Two school-leavers obtained jobs in firms where their neighbours were working. As soon as the vacancies arose, they asked their managers to "keep these jobs" for these two school-leavers.

Even some of those who recognised the importance of qualifications began to acknowledge that having the right contacts can also help. For example, Nesan said:

**"You are not secure in any job at any time. Today, if you haven't got a relative or a connection in the business world or so, you must forget about getting yourself a job in a hurry. When you have contacts you can get a job immediately."**

#### 6.11 CRITERIA FOR RECRUITMENT

Data in respect of this category were analysed for twelve school-leavers, and accounted for 4.16 per cent of the total content that was analysed for the whole group. It also comprised 5.10 per cent of content analysed for ordinary grade school-leavers, as against 3.60 per cent for those from the practical grade.

The employers of three school-leavers in lower-middle-class jobs, and of one apprentice, indicated that they used some kind of formal testing when recruiting young workers. One employer said that an IQ test was used on some occasions, while another employer conducted a test in typing. The symbols obtained in typing in the matriculation examination were also considered. The apprentice was given an aptitude test, while one of the school-leavers in a lower-middle-class job had to write two tests devised by the Department of Manpower. The manager explained the nature of these tests.

**"We administer two tests, one for alertness, and the other for supervisory training. These are recognised tests devised by the Department of Manpower. We don't give them the tests at the beginning because they do very badly when they come straight from school. But once they have been here for a while they adjust and settle down. That's when we test them."**

Whereas academic criteria were used to a limited extent, employers seemed to give greater prominence to social criteria in the selection of school-leavers for various categories of jobs. The employers of semi-skilled labourers thought that it was more important that workers should be "honest", "reliable", "stable", "punctual" and "clean". All that was needed was a basic education because workers could easily be "trained on the job" to acquire low-level skills.



The employers of apprentices, and of those in lower-middle-class jobs placed much stress on the young workers' dress, speech, personality, behaviour, and family background. The following remarks of the director of the firm where John worked, the manager of the firm which employed Sagren, the professional assistant at Champa's firm, and the managing director of Sheila's firm illustrate the importance attached to social criteria.

John's director : "The person must be of reasonable appearance; in other words, we look at dress, neatness of hair, and so on. We also give them an aptitude test. Appearance is always our guiding factor. I firmly believe that the whole business spectrum should be concerned with the evaluating of people."

Sagren's manager : "I must be honest. I take visual appearance very much into account. If the youngster was a prefect, obviously things like that can help. But if he comes here with his shirt hanging out, has about twenty tattoos and earrings, and looks like a typical grass smoker, then he's not going to get the job. We check whether he is interested in working, or in having a good time."

Professional Assistant (Champa's firm) : "Besides giving a test in typing, I also judge the person's appearance, the manner of speech, hobbies, family background and things like that. Taking all that into consideration, I found Champa to be the best of the few that I interviewed. The fact that she was referred by quite a responsible person was also a good recommendation."

Sheila's managing director : "We needed someone proficient in taking of orders, maintenance of records, and various other duties. We also look for pleasantness, a good personality, good manner of attending to people, speaking to them on the phone, etc. The person must have a good, outgoing personality. We couldn't have someone that is meek and mild. Sheila was chosen because she came over as being intelligent, well dressed, and had a pleasant approach. We also checked her handwriting, and gave her a test of filing."

The employers of those in semi-skilled work, and in apprenticeships insisted that their future workers should be well disciplined, obedient and reliable. For example, Prakash's manager said:

"Our workers must be disciplined. Once a person is disciplined, he can adapt himself to almost anything. There's quite a lot of discipline needed in this job of motor mechanics. The youngsters who are well disciplined normally take off very well. Basic self discipline is one of the biggest contributors to the success in a job."

Enthusiasm, energy, ability to cope with the pressure of work, being career-orientated are other criteria which the employers of the apprentices, and lower-middle-class workers seemed to stress. For example, Sagren's manager said:

"Our future production trainees must be bright, enthusiastic, energetic and with potential. I told Sagren ~~when~~ I employed him that he cannot remain at the level of a bundle chaser. We took him on with a view to moving into the production training line. He must aim towards a career in this firm. He could become a supervisor or an analyst."

John's foreman also seemed to highlight the importance of working hard. He said:

"Although standard eight is the minimum qualification for this job, we look for ~~someone~~ with as much schooling as possible. We also consider things like his manner of speech, and his attitude to work. He has to be hard working. We try to find out in the interview how they will react to work and pressure."

In this sense the labour market became a social field within which the identities of the school-leavers were created partly as a result of the employers' perceptions. The focus in the present study on ascriptive characteristics such as appearance, and general social criteria is in line with the findings of other studies such as Blackburn and Mann (1979); Ashton and Maguire (1980); Ashton, Maguire and Garland (1982); and Jenkins (1983).

#### 6.12 CONTROL OF WORKERS

Various forms of control were used in the different work settings. Employers checked on things such as the rates of production, attendance, workers' movements within the workplace, behaviour and attitude to work. This category made up 6.43 per cent of the content analysed for all school-leavers.

As in the case of the previous discussion on employers' perceptions of the criteria for recruitment, these forms of control can also be understood in the context of work in capitalist settings. For most of the employers, it was important that these new recruits develop the "right attitudes" so that there would be a stable, efficient and motivated workforce. They were particularly keen that workers should contribute to the maximum production of goods; that superiors should maintain

control over workers; and that workers show respect to their supervisors. Such values were quite clearly steeped in the spirit of capitalism.

In the factory where Juggie worked, one of the directors occupied a position which enabled him to get a clear view of the entire floor. The workers were constantly under his surveillance and did not waste time. The other director sat in his office, and kept a regular watch through a one-way screen.

Perumal's firm which was also concerned about improving the rates of production had some very strict rules. He gave an account of these rules.

"The rules are very strict. If you are late for work, your name goes on the record card. You also have to report to the manager. When you go to the toilet you have to carry a disc and return this when you return to your job. If you don't do this, you get fined. If such rules are not applied, many workers will be loitering around."

In some of the semi-skilled jobs, employers thought of different ways of improving production. One of the ways of preventing workers from chatting and wasting time was to get them to listen to popular music over the radio while they worked. One of the supervisors explained why this was done.

"The workers are happy listening to music. You get more production that way. If there is no music, they talk to each other."

The employers of school-leavers in lower-middle-class jobs and apprenticeships were also concerned about matters such as attendance, and kept strict control over this. Some of their comments explain this situation.

Champa's employer : "Champa used to take ill and stay away from work at the beginning. I had to talk to her about this, and advise her seriously about being more responsible. If we have work scheduled for today, it must go out today. Since then, she hasn't stayed away."

Mayadevi's supervisor : "At one stage she wasn't very interested in her work. But after speaking to her, she picked up again. Other workers wanted to keep chatting to her. Because of this she did not complete her work in time. But after I spoke to her about this, she was very co-operative and stopped chatting during working hours."



There was also strict control over the workers' use of time. Prakash, for example, while servicing motor vehicles, was given specific tasks to be completed within certain periods of time. If he exceeded the time limits allowed, the journeyman was expected to draw his attention to this. Those who were employed as filing and coding clerks were given specific numbers of files and sales vouchers which were to be coded and processed within a limited time. The senior sales clerk, supervisor or manager made sure that this task did not take more than a month. The works production manager of one of the firms explained why time is such an important factor.

**"They have to realise what targets are, and having to work to achieve these targets. Targets have to be reached by due dates. They have to realise that when targets are not achieved everyone else is held up. They have to also be regular to work and to be punctual. A sense of time is important."**

Some supervisors also ensured that these young workers did not waste time during breaks. Kesval related how he was closely watched during one such period.

**"During the tea-break, my friends and I spent about half an hour in the strong-room, drinking tea and chatting. The supervisor stormed in and told us to get to work since time was up. He was very angry. He usually pushes us around."**

Workers on the factory floor were closely supervised through overt forms. This was evident from the bureaucratic principles built into the organisational arrangements. The large firms required journeymen, supervisors, foremen, chargehands and so on to keep a close and regular watch over the school-leavers. Verbal reports were submitted to managers on the progress of these workers. In one of the large clothing factories the workers' rates of production were checked through an hourly recording of scores on computer sheets. Workers were warned if they fell below the required rate.

Where formal training programmes were offered, it was vital that young workers be introduced to the **"climate of production," "control"** and **"obedience"** on the factory floor. This was especially evident in training which apprentices had to undergo. One of the school-leavers who was being trained for a job in a supervisory capacity at a large clothing factory had to fit into one such programme. His manager outlined the requirements:

"We train them to realise exactly what industry is about. They have to realise what targets have to be produced, and how to achieve these. If these targets are not finished on time, everyone else is held up. He also has to realise that it is important to come to work on time. Once they've been here for some time, their thinking has changed. They have matured, and that's basically all we're looking for ... Once they are trained, they know how to earn the respect of the machine operators. This is important because the operators will realise that a trainee can be a supervisor in two year's time. They may say, 'Look at him. He's always neat, and always on time for work. He doesn't fool around. He gets on with the job.' They'll respect him when he gives them instructions."

By contrast, the forms of control over the lower-middle-class workers were less visible, though also structured along bureaucratic lines. Sub-managers, supervisors and senior clerks were in charge of these young workers, and in these cases, too, progress reports had to be submitted to directors and managers. However, controls were sufficiently flexible to encourage these young people to identify with the aims and values of their firms, and to develop some independence.

The school-leavers in all three categories, but especially those in semi-skilled jobs, were very conscious of the values which prevailed, the forms of control and the nature of the unequal power relationships which existed between their employers and themselves. Some felt that the control was too harsh, and resented being **"pushed around."** One of the boys was also bitter about the fact that his supervisor used **"vulgar language"** at workers who could not keep pace with the required rates of production. Another was unhappy that his foreman could get away with arriving late for work and not having his pay reduced; whereas workers like himself had to **"clock in"** regularly. He also found it very difficult to ask the director or manager for an increase in wages for fear of being dismissed. It was common knowledge that workers who tried to do so were fired. The experiences of the semi-skilled workers in particular were clearly those of domination and control. They were locked into situations which they disliked.

#### 6.13 "GOOD" AND "BAD" WORKERS

Slightly more than half the number of school-leavers were seen by their employers in these terms, and this category constituted

4.91 per cent of the total content analysed for this group. It also made up 6.12 per cent of content analysed for school-leavers from the ordinary grade, as opposed to 4.20 per cent of content analysed for the practical grade school-leavers.

When assessing the worth of these school-leavers, employers once again relied heavily on social criteria similar to those which they used in recruitment. The values on which they based their judgments of "good" and "bad" workers were essentially those connected with the process of production.

The employers of all three categories of school-leavers described their good workers as those who "carry out orders", "learn easily," are "keen," "obedient," "honest," "reliable," "well disciplined" and "respectable." The employers of the apprentices and of those in lower-middle-class jobs felt that good workers also "volunteered to undertake extra tasks," "could be left on their own," "got on well with the rest of the staff," and "went beyond what was required of them."

The following extract gives some indication of the criteria used by some of the employers in categorising a "good" worker.

Saras's supervisor : "A good worker must have a sense of responsibility. Work must be attended to immediately. She has to work hard and take her department's responsibility as her own. Saras has shown herself to be responsible and versatile. She does lots of things for the department, besides typing. Whenever she has finished a piece of work, she asks if there are other things which she can do. She is also regular to work and polite to her seniors."

The initiative of a good worker was defined narrowly, mainly in terms of how the interests of the firm could be served. This meant that workers should learn to fit into the narrow confines of their job, by excelling at the specific skills required for their tasks. They were not expected to display insights into matters which extended beyond this; that is, to engage in activities that taught them something about how their jobs fitted into the rest of the organisation, or the place of their particular industries within the wider society. This limited definition of a "good worker" is witnessed in this statement by one of the managers:

"A good worker is someone who is not scared of work; but we're not looking for someone who will work till his sweat falls on. He must be someone who keeps himself busy, and shows an interest to learn new things. A lot of our workers, though they are not allowed to, when we are not looking, they will be learning to sew at a machine. They need to know how to sew when they become chargehands. It's guys like that who will make it to the top."

Workers who were considered to be "bad" were those who "wasted time," "did not show much interest," "were unreliable and lazy," "irregular to work," and "dishonest." There were two such workers from the semi-skilled group. The journeyman of one of these workers complained that "recently he has been arriving late at work" and that he informed the manager about this. The journeyman also felt that this youngster was "interested more in women, liquor and having a good time." He explained that if this continued he would be dismissed.

Managers and supervisors also expressed the wish that schools should assist them in producing "good" future workers. Though they acknowledged that school-leavers hardly ever use specific knowledge acquired in school in jobs such as these, they nevertheless felt that much could be done to teach pupils how to carry out instructions, and how to communicate with people. It was also necessary to instil discipline in these future workers.

#### 6.14 THE EXPERIENCE OF WORK

This category made up 15.31 per cent of the total content analysed for all school-leavers. It also accounted for 16.12 per cent of content analysed for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, as against 13.50 per cent for those from Ridgemount.

The transition into work was gradual for most school-leavers. Their interpretations of work were to a great extent framed within their understanding of the power relationships between employers and workers, contradictions between the experiences of schooling and work, elements of the culture of the wider society, and specific aspects of Indian subculture. In many respects these interpretations contrasted sharply with the perspectives of employers.



Almost every one of those who were in semi-skilled jobs had little or no prior knowledge of what these jobs would involve. For example, this is clear from Perumal's remarks:

**"It was only when I got into the job that I learnt something about it. There was no training, so I learnt by observing others doing the job. It's more of a physical job. We work with our hands, carrying things. There's not much brain work required."**

Except for John who learnt something about shopfitting and cabinet making from his brother-in-law, most of the other school-leavers went into the jobs as raw recruits. However, it did not take long to learn what was required of them. For example, Sagren said:

**"I had no idea of what this job involves. I came to know about it only when I came here. It wasn't a difficult job to catch up. It took about three weeks to learn it."**

Most of the semi-skilled workers fitted into the work situation easily. Though they did not receive any formal training, in most cases they learnt what to do within the first few days of being employed. This was achieved mainly by observing others at work. They also found it easy to relate to older workers who willingly offered advice and guidance whenever this was needed. However, two school-leavers complained about being "pushed around" and decided to leave work soon after they were employed. According to one of them, his supervisor, "had no way of talking to the staff. He used to use vulgar language."

As in the case of the semi-skilled workers, the apprentices also got on well with older workers, and found them to be helpful. One of the apprentices said that those who worked with him "had good habits." On the other hand, while another apprentice acknowledged the assistance given by some older workers, he found that others were a bad influence. They "smoked, drank, and swore." This happened mainly at staff parties and picnics.

Those in lower-middle-class jobs had no real complaints. They seemed to adjust easily to the demands of the jobs, and also got on well with older workers. As in the case of the two other categories of workers, it did not take these school-leavers long to learn what was required of them. Here too, much was learnt by observing older and more experienced workers in the job situation, and by seeking advice when they experienced difficulties.

The semi-skilled workers complained that these jobs were tedious. Many of them had to be on their feet for most of the day. In addition, there were specific difficulties experienced by some of them. For example, Logan found it difficult to deal with customers who returned video machines and cassettes late, and who refused to pay the penalties. There were also instances when he had to deal with complaints about the poor quality and condition of the cassettes and machines that were loaned. Often he had to refer such complaints to other workers or to his employer.

Ruben did not like his first job as a switchboard operator because he found it too taxing to cope with reception work, and answering the telephone at the same time. People tended to get restless when they were kept waiting. Ruben related an incident which illustrates the kind of difficulties which he experienced.

"On the first day I started work, a person phoned from Johannesburg and wanted me to put his call through to a certain room. I was busy attending to people at the desk and I asked him to wait. He started swearing and threatened to report me to the manager. When I told him that I was attending to the switchboard and reception at the same time, he seemed to understand."

Whereas the apprentices did not mention any specific difficulties, a few school-leavers in the lower-middle-class jobs said that it was mainly towards the end of the month that they were extremely busy. However, they were careful to explain that at other times during the month the jobs were manageable. This can be inferred from the comments of these two school-leavers.

Sheila : "I know my work on my finger tips, and I don't get held up. There are some days when I'm very, very busy. Today I'm a bit slack. On a busy day the phone keeps ringing. There are several orders to be taken. There are so many things to attend to. Sometimes the reps don't submit forms on time, and this affects the filing. I refer this to the sales manager and he helps out."

Mayadevi : "At the end of the month, there's a lot of work to push out. That's when I really find it difficult. The manager, senior clerk and others are calling for things. You really don't know what's happening in the office. Another busy time is when the auditors arrive. That's when we have to search for vouchers, invoices, documents, etc."



The careerless nature of the semi-skilled jobs did not provide any intrinsic enjoyment. In the face of much boredom, routine and bad working conditions, many of these school-leavers used cultural patterns from their class and family backgrounds to devise strategies for survival. For example, many of these lower-working-class boys showed a lively interest in pop music, soccer and films while they were in school. There was also evidence of this during my visits to their homes and neighbourhoods. At work, there were pictures and posters of popular film stars, singers, footballers, and semi-naked women stuck on walls. Topics of conversation, and humour in these environments also centred around such themes. This enabled these workers to tread through the dead experience of careerless work.

They also tried to seek some enjoyment by "joking," and "passing the time." Juggie's and Moonsamy's accounts give some indication of the humour which took place on the factory floor.

Juggie : "Some of the workers get up to mischief. They paint the tool-boxes of other workers with paint remover. When they try to open the boxes their hands start burning and itching. This joke is played on all the new workers."

Moonsamy : "While you are busy working, someone takes a piece of string with something attached to it, and hooks it to your back. They do it quietly and run away. Wherever you go, you notice that the others are looking at you and giggling. This happens often."

Logan and his workmates "passed the time" when business was slack at the video shop, by "doing nothing" or chatting with girls who walked past the shop. They asked them whether they were "engaged," "have younger sisters at home," if they "are available" and so on. They also told or listened to vulgar jokes in the company of some customers with whom they were on friendly terms. This pattern of behaviour which most adults would see as vulgar, a waste of time and coarse is full of incident for these youngsters. It enables them to create some enjoyment out of the routine, repetitive and dull experience of work. Corrigan (1977), for example, describes this as a complex form of youth subculture, and labels it as "doing nothing." Weird ideas are borne out of boredom.

Several of the semi-skilled workers saw hardly any connection between the demands of their jobs, and the things which they learnt in school. For example, this is evident from Perumal's remarks about school and work.

"This job is not linked to anything we did in school. This is mostly carpentry, but in school I did physics, biology, etc. In the careers lessons, the guidance teacher spoke about jobs like dentistry, teaching and so on. He didn't tell us anything about carpentry."

Of the apprentices, Prakash maintained that while there was no direct relationship between school and work, there was some connection between school subjects and the apprenticeship training that he had received at the technikon. Nesan, however, felt that school and work differed greatly because employment demanded more independence. Their perceptions of the relationships between school and work are evident in these extracts.

Prakash : "The only relationship I can see between school and work is the general reading and writing. There is no direct relationship at all. School is very general. However, in the in-service course that I attended at the technikon, maths, science and technical drawing required a knowledge of what we had done in school."

Nesan : "Unlike in school, in the work situation you have to do everything yourself. You are given a certain piece of job, and a time limit within which to complete it. If the foreman finds a fault, you have to strip the whole thing and redo it. Here you learn from experience, and you are left alone to work on your tasks. You soon get used to all the difficulties you come across."

On the other hand, those in lower-middle-class jobs acknowledged the greater relevance of school to work. Some spoke about the value of specific school subjects such as typing, English, mathematics and accountancy for clerical and secretarial jobs. Despite this, there were some members within this group who felt that there was not much connection between school and work. These mixed reactions are evident in the following extracts.

Sagren : "Sometimes, maths comes in handy, but nothing else I can think of is of use in this job. I have not encountered any real problems in this job. There is not much that school could do to help one in this job. It depends on your ability of learning the job in the work situation."

Sheila : "The accountancy and maths that I learnt in school does help me when I handle orders. I also deal with people. Here, I felt that my schooling really helped me, especially English and reading. In school I often took part in debates. That's why I think I can manage talking to people. However they could have taught us typing, and the use of computers. Most of the White schools offer computer education."

#### 6.15 REACTIONS TO WORK

Data in respect of this category were analysed for every school-leaver, and constituted 12.29 per cent of the total content analysed for the whole group.

Those in the semi-skilled sector felt that besides being in insecure jobs, these careerless occupations hardly provided opportunities for advancement. Many said that their jobs were boring, unchallenging and insecure. They also expressed their disappointment at being overworked and underpaid. Some school-leavers who described their jobs in these terms were:

Juggie : "When I started work I earned forty-four rands. Now they have increased this to forty-six rands a week. I want to leave this job and take up a trade or something in the electrical field. Is it worth having standard nine and earning forty-six rands a week? I wasn't interested so much in the pay, as much as learning the job."

Perumal : "If I get a better job I will take it. I don't think this job is good for me. It's a bit tiring, and we do the same things every day. With my level of education, a clerical job will suit me better. I will be in an office, and it's a cleaner job. I get bored in this job, doing the same things over and over again, assembling pedestals."

Lennie : "The clothing industry has no trade. This is not an interesting job. This job is tiring. There is no chance to rest. It is also unchallenging. I like to do a job in which I can prove my worth. This job is also meant mainly for women. There is also short time, poor wages, and lack of promotions."

One of their forms of resistance was to "waste time on the job" while the supervisors or chargehands were busy elsewhere. This was a way of challenging exploitation by employers. For

example, Moonsamy ignored the instructions of his foreman to work fast. He explained this behaviour as follows:

"I put it in this ear, and take it out of the next. They rush us while we are working. I don't like to work fast because you can't work hard like a dog for forty-five rands a week."

By comparison, two of the apprentices and some of the school-leavers in middle-class jobs did not react in this way, despite the routine nature of some of their work. They acknowledged the fact that there was some security, the chance to acquire a limited amount of higher-level skills, and this could be used to negotiate for a better job at a later stage. These constructions of meanings were most likely derived from their upper-working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds which stress the importance of "moving ahead in life."

Prakash, for example, did not mind earning less money or working in untidy conditions, as long as he learnt a trade and benefitted from the experience. He said:

"The wages is not very much, but I'm not looking at that. I'm interested in gaining the experience. If I'm going to look for another job, I know I got a trade in my hands. Most of my friends don't like a messy job like this. They rather sit in an office and have a pen in their hands. They say that office jobs are not that hard. You just sit around and do your paper work. I didn't really think about the dirt, grease and oil when I chose this job because it's what I wanted to do. I fitted and adapted myself to it."

By contrast, Nesan who was also an apprentice felt that he was too highly qualified to work as a cabinet-maker. He preferred his second job as a data processing clerk. His remarks reflect this.

"Most of the workers in this factory had standard six or so. Since my qualification is matric, that job didn't suit me. The hours of work are also too long. Quite a few times I worked overtime and wasn't paid. This second job of data processing clerk is definitely better. It is a white-collar job, and unlike cabinet-making I don't work with things that are very dirty and dusty."

There was mixed reaction from those in middle-class jobs about the suitability of their occupations. Some like Mayadevi and Sheila felt that though their jobs did not offer them all that

they hoped for, at least there was some security and prospects for "short-term" advancement. It was possible to remain in these jobs for relatively long periods and there was some scope to become senior typists and clerks.

Mayadevi : "I've become quite used to this job, and I feel I will last a long time in it. I find it interesting. I can end up working in the computer room. At first I was a filing clerk, and then a coding clerk. I like this because it's an office job. It is a clean job. You are given much responsibility to work on your own."

Sheila : "I prefer to stay in this job because there are opportunities for promotion. I can become a typist to the sales director. I enjoy working here."

However, others felt strongly about the routine nature of their jobs and the limited opportunities which were offered. Having a standard-ten certificate, and "doing jobs that paid so little" and provided limited scope for advancement was not worth it. For example, Kesval said:

"I'm not satisfied with this job. The salary is bad and this is a boring job. It's not worth working here. They want a matric certificate for this job, but a person with standard six education will find this job very easy. Filing of invoices and so on just requires common sense."

He also resented having to do odd jobs like carrying files up and down to an "old, smelly, and damp strong-room." He said:

"We have to carry the dusty, old files. These are taken to the old strong-rooms. There's water dripping, and the files are in a terrible condition. Most of them are rotting. There's a terrible smell in there. This company makes a lot of profit, but if you walk into the factory area, it's in a terrible condition. The place is almost falling down. With the profits they are making they should renovate the premises. This company is very mean when it comes to salaries. The African workers are underpaid, and the Indians are a little better off."

Saras's and Champa's reactions also reflect grievances about poor pay.

Saras : "The hours of work are too taxing and the pay of 225 rands a month is absolutely too little. This job is also too routine."



Champa : "As soon as I get sufficient experience in this job I will move to another firm which offers better pay. A dictaphone typist is well paid by most other firms."

However, school-leavers in all three categories, and more especially those in semi-skilled work, realised that despite the unpleasant conditions and the monotony it was not easy to give up their jobs. Other jobs were not easily available. Because of the poor financial circumstances of their families, and their general powerlessness in the work situation, several school-leavers were drawn into a position of compromise and settlement. They had to hold on to these "temporary jobs" till "something better came along."

#### 6.16 CONCLUSION

The experiences of these three groups of school-leavers can be seen as the production and reproduction of life-styles. These are evident when there is an examination of the links between their experiences of schooling, family and neighbourhood backgrounds, and their class experiences in general. These life-styles are maintained and supported by the day-to-day practices and regularities of the work environment. This is achieved by tacitly teaching these young workers important norms, values, beliefs and self concepts which sustain their positions within the stratification system.

The labour market processes, as reflected through practices such as social criteria used for recruitment, forms of control exerted over workers and so on, combine with social-class background and education to limit certain groups to particular jobs. Work becomes intimately related to class formation. For example, we have seen how those who ended up in careerless jobs are from lower-working-class families, and from the practical grade. These are the people whose families did not possess cultural capital, received poor quality education, and whose jobs required low-level skills. All of this helped to explain how their lower-status positions became consolidated within the existing social arrangements.

Though these school-leavers had no intentions of taking up semi-skilled work, they ultimately found themselves locked into work situations which had much in common with the attitudes



and values of their class. Other factors such as the financial and material circumstances of their families, and the unavailability of jobs also contributed to the reproduction of their group's status.

In this cultural and social reproduction process, the culture of the workplace and the school-leavers' production of culture were intimately related, each creating and re-creating aspects of the other. Despite the fact that these school-leavers had reservations about the value of qualifications for these semi-skilled jobs, and resented the uninteresting nature of work and the harsh conditions under which they were expected to labour, they found it difficult to free themselves from this cycle of careerless work. The fact that they offered some forms of resistance also meant that the reproduction process was not based simply on the acceptance of dominant ideologies. Though they disliked their present jobs, they moved into other similar jobs when those were available, **"as long as the money was good."** Contradictions such as these were at the heart of the reproduction process. Though they realised the general value of educational qualifications, their lack of cultural capital, poor educational levels, and the instability of the job market led them into work that reproduced their class belief in the instrumental, the **"here and now."**

However, it is important to note that not all the school-leavers ended up in such dead-end, careerless jobs. There were exceptions, such as those who got into apprenticeships and lower-middle-class jobs which in some cases offered better pay, a measure of security and opportunities for promotion. Nevertheless, when seen globally, even within the categories of apprenticeships and the lower middle class, many of these jobs were routine, repetitive and unchallenging. On the whole, these school-leavers entered a narrow range of jobs.

The decisions of the apprentices and those in lower-middle-class jobs were also reached through tensions, struggles and contradictions. Those who were unhappy with jobs that paid little and were unsuited to their educational level, were nevertheless prepared to put up with these to use the **"experience"** later to launch out into **"something better."** Others who found some satisfaction accepted the short-term prospects offered by these

jobs and were prepared to wait till something better came along. Ambitions such as these were part of the culture of the upper-working-class, and lower-class families of these school-leavers.

There is also evidence of the reproductive function of gender in the types of jobs chosen by boys and girls. The girls found themselves in jobs such as typists, clerks and secretaries which are considered to be typically female, while boys in the semi-skilled category in particular entered male jobs. These are the jobs that required endurance and physical effort. As was the case with parents and teachers, some employers supported the choice of female jobs on the grounds that girls are not "career-minded", and that they would soon marry. They were therefore regarded as temporary workers who should not be considered for promotion to the upper ranks. The girls themselves did not think of their careers along these lines, though some of them indicated their intention to marry and then return to these jobs. However, the fact that they limited their sights to jobs in this category accounted for their own contribution to the reproduction of gender in the labour market.

The fact that the jobs in all three categories are those which are traditionally occupied by Indians reveals how the processes in the labour market helped to reproduce the status positions of Indians in the society at large. Just as they attended schools for their own race group, and lived in their own group areas, they worked mainly amongst Indians, occupying an intermediate position in a racially-divided labour market.

In the final analysis, the interpretations of these school-leavers which were drawn from their class and race backgrounds strengthened and reproduced aspects of collective Indian experience in the South African labour market. This ultimately reproduces and deepens the class, race and gender antagonisms that lie at the root of the South African capitalist society.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 7. INTO UNEMPLOYMENT AND DOMESTICITY

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This analysis of the school-leavers' experiences of unemployment and domesticity introduces an added dimension to the transitional process: that the transition into work is seldom smooth. For many of these school-leavers, it was broken by the experience of unemployment, and for some also by domesticity.

This interim period was characterised by a variety of economic, cultural and social conditions through which these youngsters had to struggle before making the final entry into some kind of "permanent" employment. Such conditions were rooted in the wider structures. When faced with these problems the school-leavers interpreted their chances of getting jobs in a variety of ways. Nevertheless such interpretations arose out of the same common experience of unemployment, and in the case of some girls, domesticity. These also reflected the material, social, and cultural aspects of their lives.

On closer examination, the analysis points to how the structural conditions of unemployment and the students' responses to these are both involved in the social reproduction process. This is especially evident in the case of the practical grade, and working-class school-leavers who make up the bulk of this sample.

#### 7.2 COLLECTION OF DATA

##### 7.2.1 Details of School-Leavers in Unemployment and Domesticity

Altogether there were seventeen school-leavers who were unemployed, and, in some cases they also experienced domesticity. In particular, there were five girls whose experiences belonged more to domesticity than to unemployment. They spent much of their time attending to duties at home, and four of these were married within a year of leaving school. These five are referred to as the group in "domesticity," made up of Savy and Kalavathee from the practical grade at Orchard Lane; Sundrie and Raksha from the practical grade at Ridgemount, and Shireen from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane.

The entire group of seventeen included both boys and girls from both schools. The students from Orchard Lane were from both grades but those from Ridgemount came from the practical grade only.

TABLE 7.1  
SCHOOL-LEAVERS IN UNEMPLOYMENT AND DOMESTICITY

SCHOOL-LEAVERS	SEX	SOCIAL CLASS	SCHOOL	GRADE	PERIOD OF UNEMPLOYMENT	CASUAL JOBS	PERIOD OF DOMESTICITY
Lennie	M	L.W.C.	O.L.	P	6 months	1	12 months 1 month
Logan	M	L.W.C.	O.L.	P	1 month	1	
John	M	U.W.C.	O.L.	P	12 months	3	
Nesan	M	L.M.C.	O.L.	P	1 month	1	
Savy	F	L.W.C.	O.L.	P	12 months		
Kalavathee	F	U.W.C.	O.L.	P			
Pat	M	U.W.C.	R.	P	8 months	1	12 months 24 months
David	M	U.W.C.	R.	P	6 months	1	
Ruben	M	U.W.C.	R.	P	7 months	1	
Asha	F	L.W.C.	R.	P	18 months	3	
Sundrie	F	L.W.C.	R.	P	12 months	1	
Raksha	F	L.W.C.	R.	P	24 months		
Juggie	M	L.W.C.	O.L.	O	3 months	1	12 months
Jaylal	M	U.W.C.	O.L.	O	4 months	1	
Perumal	M	L.W.C.	O.L.	O	6 months	1	
Suraya	F	L.M.C.	O.L.	O	6 months	1	
Shireen	F	U.W.C.	O.L.	O	12 months		

Table 7.2 below indicates the numbers of students from the two schools, and from the two grades in each school. The table also indicates distribution according to sex.

TABLE 7.2  
NUMERICAL DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS

GRADE	RIDGEMOUNT		ORCHARD LANE		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
Ordinary	0	0	3	2	5
Practical	3	3	4	2	12
TOTAL	3	3	7	4	17

### 7.2.2 Establishing Contact, and Sources of Data

Regular contact was maintained with all school-leavers from the time they left school till they found employment. This was done through home visits, and, in some cases, by telephone. Through these means it was hoped to get as much information as possible on the school-leavers' experiences of unemployment.

Data were collected through interviews and discussions with each of these school-leavers during the home visits. In some cases there were also opportunities to observe the activities in which they were involved at home and in the neighbourhood. These observations applied especially to girls in domesticity, and to boys and girls who listened to pop music, watched television, or engaged in other activities in their leisure time at home. In a few cases I also saw some boys "passing the time" in the company of their friends at shopping centres and street corners. These observations were recorded in field notes.

To make sure that I was being fed regularly with information, I made regular telephone calls to those who could be contacted in this way. In addition, I requested all the school-leavers to phone me whenever they pleased, especially when some new or interesting development took place regarding their search for work. During and immediately after each telephone call, the details of what transpired were recorded in the form of notes. Table 7.3 gives an indication of the amounts of data collected via the various sources.

TABLE 7.3  
SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF DATA COLLECTED

SOURCE	NO. OF SCHOOL- LEAVERS	APPROXIMATE NO. PER SCHOOL- LEAVER	APPROXIMATE TIME PER SESSION IN MINUTES	TOTAL OBSERVATION/ RECORDING TIME IN HOURS
1. Tape recordings of interviews and discussions	17	3	60	50
2. Observations of school-leavers' activities recorded in field notes	9	1	10	2
3. Telephone conversations recorded in notes	11	3	10	6

Altogether a total time of approximately 58 hours was devoted to the collection of data from these various sources.



### 7.2.3 Observations, Discussions, Interviews and Telephone Conversations

The discussions and interviews which took place during the home visits revolved around the following aspects: the search for work and its related problems; other activities in which school-leavers were engaged during the period of unemployment; feelings about unemployment; means of supporting themselves; reactions towards school and career guidance in retrospect; future plans for work and further studies.

The questions which were posed centred around the particular circumstances of each school-leaver. The central issues outlined above were the main topics of discussion, but as additional data were gathered about each person, certain new questions emerged. Therefore, a uniform set of questions could not be used in any interview, each being individually organised around a selected set of relevant questions that were in-depth and open-ended.

During home visits observations were made on home and neighbourhood conditions. Much of these data were already analysed in Chapter Four of the present section on the family. Observations were also made of the activities in which school-leavers were involved. These have already been referred to in the previous section.

On a few occasions I met some of the friends of these school-leavers, who were also unemployed, and listened to some of their conversations about their experiences of unemployment. The accounts given by these friends tallied with much of what the school-leavers had said to me during interviews and discussions about employers' insistence on experience, qualifications, and about their own experiences of race discrimination.

Telephone conversations usually centred around the specific experiences of each school-leaver. In each case, the conversations helped me to update the information between one home visit and the next. They kept me informed about new jobs which they applied for, casual jobs which they had taken, interviews for jobs, the use of contacts, future plans and so on.



#### 7.2.4 Some Problems Encountered with Data Collection

Except for a few cases, no real problems were encountered in the collection of data. Two school-leavers who could not easily be contacted were Logan from the practical grade at Orchard Lane, and Pat from the practical grade at Ridgemount. Logan frequently changed residence, and this made it difficult to keep track of him. However, the fact that he telephoned me regularly helped to overcome this difficulty. On one occasion I tried to contact him at the home of one of his friends, where he was living temporarily. I met with some resistance. However, when I explained that I knew Logan from the time that he was in secondary school and that he was one of the subjects in my research study, this family co-operated willingly.

Pat could be reached by telephone only with difficulty. Often when I phoned he was either not at home, or **"not available."** As mentioned earlier in this study, it was also difficult to gain access to his home since his relatives did not want me to know that they were running a shebeen. This meant that I had to arrange with his friends to meet him at their homes, or at some neutral venue.

David and Ruben from the practical grade at Ridgemount posed a problem of another kind. They wanted me to help them to find work, to provide them with **"a list of vacancies"** at the firms I visited. For example, David said:

**"You are a lecturer who studied us, and you know some firms that you visited to observe those who got jobs. You can tell the employers of some of the struggles of school-leavers who are looking for jobs. After all we helped you so much in this research of yours, but you didn't help us to find jobs."**

I tried to explain to both of these school-leavers that my visits to firms were confined strictly to conducting the research. This was the condition on which I was given entry to firms. However, I was also careful to point out that where employers discussed unemployment with me, I sought the opportunity to talk about the experiences of the school-leavers in this study. Under these circumstances it was difficult to act as a **"contact."** I was not certain whether they accepted this explanation or not, and do not know the extent to which this might have affected their relationships with me.

### 7.3 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

As in the case of data analysed previously, here too, the data contained in the interviews, discussions, observations and telephone calls were classified according to an index system. A preliminary analysis of content pointed to eighteen broad categories, according to which the main areas of the content could be arranged. These were topics which the school-leavers spoke about when discussing their experiences of unemployment. These categories are listed in tables 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6. The procedure adopted for the coding of various categories, the tallying of frequencies, and the analysis of content was the same as that described in the previous chapters.

There were instances when the statements or references could be fitted into more than one category. For example, when the school-leavers spoke about their **"frustrations of looking for work,"** general references were also made to employers' insistence on **"experience"** and **"qualifications"**; or to **"race"** discrimination. In these instances each reference was carefully examined, and the specific statements about **"frustrations of looking for work"** were recorded in that category, and if there were other general references to **"experience," "qualifications"** or **"race,"** those were recorded in their respective categories. A similar problem was experienced when analysing the content for the categories, **"unsuitability of jobs"** and **"lowering of career aspirations."** The procedure outlined above was also adopted here.

Table 7.4 presents the content analysed in respect of the eighteen categories for the entire sample; table 7.5 refers to Orchard Lane, while table 7.6 is for Ridgemount (on pages 382 to 384).

It should be noted that a crude tally of frequencies does not necessarily reveal what is perhaps most important about these different categories, that is how they were linked in the minds of the school-leavers. For example, when they spoke about **"application for jobs," "unsuitability of jobs,"** and **"lowering of career aspirations,"** it was possible to see the relationships between these three categories when trying to understand how these school-leavers changed their career routes.

TABLE 7.4

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES  
FOR THE TOTAL SAMPLE OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE						ORDINARY GRADE						TOTAL					
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Application for jobs	35	15.28	7	19	14.62	4	54	15.04	11	17	14.53	3	5	14.29	1	22	14.47	4
2. Frustrations of looking for work	28	12.23	6	17	13.07	4	45	12.53	10	15	12.82	3	3	8.57	1	18	11.84	4
3. Unsuitability of jobs	14	6.11	6	2	1.54	2	16	4.46	8	7	5.98	2	0	0.0	0	7	4.61	2
4. Experience	17	7.42	5	6	4.62	3	23	6.41	8	5	4.27	3	3	8.57	1	8	5.26	4
5. Qualifications	25	10.92	7	7	5.38	2	32	8.91	9	9	7.69	3	1	2.86	1	10	6.58	4
6. Race	5	2.18	4	2	1.54	1	7	1.95	5	7	5.98	3	1	2.86	1	8	5.26	4
7. Gender	1	0.44	1	2	1.54	1	3	0.84	2	1	0.85	1	0	0.0	0	1	0.66	1
8. Contacts	18	7.86	5	5	3.84	2	23	6.41	7	9	7.69	3	2	5.70	2	11	7.23	5
9. Sub-employment	14	6.11	6	6	4.62	3	20	5.57	9	6	5.14	3	1	2.86	1	7	4.61	4
10. Financial problems	11	4.80	5	12	9.23	3	23	6.41	8	7	5.98	3	0	0.0	0	7	4.61	3
11. Isolation and boredom	8	3.49	4	4	3.08	3	12	3.34	7	8	6.84	3	0	0.0	0	8	5.26	3
12. Domesticity and marriage	0	0.0	0	20	15.38	5	20	5.57	5	0	0.0	0	5	14.29	1	5	3.29	1
13. Guilt and depression	11	4.80	6	4	3.08	2	15	4.18	8	4	3.43	3	0	0.0	0	4	2.63	3
14. Lowering of career aspirations	10	4.38	5	4	3.08	2	14	3.90	7	5	4.27	3	0	0.0	0	5	3.29	3
15. Preference for manual jobs	8	3.49	5	0	0.0	0	8	2.23	5	5	4.27	2	0	0.0	0	5	3.29	2
16. Preference for non-manual jobs	4	1.75	2	7	5.38	5	11	3.06	7	0	0.0	0	5	14.29	2	5	3.29	2
17. Desire for further education	7	3.06	4	7	5.38	3	14	3.90	7	3	2.57	1	4	11.42	1	7	4.61	2
18. Careers guidance	13	5.68	6	6	4.62	3	19	5.29	9	9	7.69	3	5	14.29	2	14	9.21	5
	22	6.36	9	11	6.67	5	33	6.46	14									

TABLE 7.5

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL AND ORDINARY GRADES

FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT ORCHARD LANE

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE									TOTAL								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL			MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Application for Jobs	16	16.84	4	8	13.56	1	24	15.58	5	33	15.57	7	13	13.82	2	46	15.03	9
2. Frustrations of looking for work	11	11.58	3	7	11.86	1	18	11.69	4	26	12.26	6	10	10.63	2	36	11.76	8
3. Unsuitability of jobs	8	8.42	3	1	1.69	1	9	5.84	4	15	7.08	5	1	1.06	1	16	5.23	6
4. Experience	5	5.26	2	4	6.78	1	9	5.84	3	10	4.72	5	7	7.45	2	17	5.56	7
5. Qualifications	12	12.62	4	4	6.78	1	16	10.39	5	21	9.91	7	5	5.32	2	26	8.50	9
6. Race	2	2.11	2	2	3.39	1	4	2.60	3	9	4.25	5	3	3.19	2	12	3.92	7
7. Gender	0	0.0	0	2	3.39	1	2	1.30	1	1	0.47	1	2	2.13	1	3	0.98	2
8. Contacts	6	6.32	2	3	5.09	1	9	5.84	3	15	7.08	5	5	5.32	3	20	6.54	8
9. Sub-employment	6	6.32	3	1	1.69	1	7	4.55	4	12	5.65	6	2	2.13	2	14	4.58	8
10. Financial problems	5	5.26	3	4	6.78	1	9	5.84	4	12	5.65	6	4	4.26	1	16	5.23	7
11. Isolation and boredom	2	2.11	1	1	1.69	1	3	1.95	2	10	4.72	4	1	1.06	1	11	3.59	5
12. Domesticity and marriage	0	0.0	0	10	16.95	2	10	6.49	2	0	0.0	0	15	15.96	3	15	4.90	3
13. Guilt and depression	5	5.26	3	2	3.39	1	7	4.55	4	9	4.25	6	2	2.13	1	11	3.59	7
14. Lowering of career aspirations	2	2.11	2	2	3.39	1	4	2.60	3	7	3.30	5	2	2.13	1	9	2.94	6
15. Preference for manual jobs	4	4.20	3	0	0.0	0	4	2.60	3	9	4.25	5	0	0.0	0	9	2.94	5
16. Preference for non-manual jobs	2	2.11	1	3	5.09	2	5	3.25	3	2	0.93	1	8	8.51	4	10	3.27	5
17. Desire for further education	3	3.16	2	3	5.09	1	6	3.90	3	6	2.83	3	7	7.45	2	13	4.25	5
18. Careers guidance	6	6.32	3	2	3.39	1	8	5.19	4	15	7.08	6	7	7.45	3	22	7.19	9

NOTE : 1. The Details for Ordinary Grade students for this table appear in Table 7.4

TABLE 7.6

CONTENT CATEGORIES BY FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND BY NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PRACTICAL GRADE FOR SCHOOL-LEAVERS AT RIDGEMOUNT

CONTENT CATEGORIES	PRACTICAL GRADE								
	MALE			FEMALE			TOTAL		
	f	%	No.	f	%	No.	f	%	No.
1. Application for jobs	19	14.18	3	11	15.49	3	30	14.63	6
2. Frustration of looking for work	17	12.69	3	10	14.08	3	27	13.17	6
3. Unsuitability of jobs	6	4.48	3	1	1.41	1	7	3.41	4
4. Experience	12	8.96	3	2	2.82	2	14	6.83	5
5. Qualifications	13	9.70	3	3	4.23	1	16	7.80	4
6. Race	3	2.23	2	0	0.0	0	3	1.46	2
7. Gender	1	0.74	1	0	0.0	0	1	0.49	1
8. Contacts	12	8.96	3	2	2.82	1	14	6.83	4
9. Sub-employment	8	5.97	3	5	7.04	2	13	6.34	5
10. Financial problems	6	4.48	2	8	11.27	2	14	6.83	4
11. Isolation and boredom	6	4.48	3	3	4.23	2	9	4.39	5
12. Domesticity and marriage	0	0.0	0	10	4.08	3	10	4.88	3
13. Guilt and depression	6	4.48	3	2	2.82	1	8	3.90	4
14. Lowering of career aspirations	8	5.97	3	2	2.82	1	10	4.88	4
15. Preference for manual jobs	4	2.99	2	0	0.0	0	4	1.96	2
16. Preference for non-manual jobs	2	1.48	1	4	5.63	3	6	2.93	4
17. Desire for further education	4	2.99	2	4	5.63	2	8	3.90	4
18. Careers guidance	7	5.22	3	4	5.63	2	11	5.37	5

When they referred to "contacts," "sub-employment," "isolation and boredom," "domesticity and marriage," these were linked in various ways to account for how the school-leavers responded to and constructed their realities under the changing conditions of unemployment. By using this kind of relational analysis, inferences were made about the actions and decisions of these school-leavers. This type of qualitative analysis indicated a great deal about the social context and the conditions in which unemployment was experienced.



### 7.3.1 Controls over the data

Checking the data for validity and reliability meant checking the inferences drawn from one set of data source with those from others. The data which were obtained from the school-leavers' interviews and discussions, telephone conversations, and observations during home visits were compared regularly. The comparisons revealed that much of what was said during one interview or discussion was consistent with information given in later interviews and discussions. For example, I did not find any great discrepancies about things such as the number of jobs which they applied for; the number of interviews that they attended and what transpired; the nature of the casual or temporary jobs which they obtained; the reasons why they regarded these as unsuitable jobs; or why they relied on contacts. During the second and third interviews and discussions I deliberately asked some questions which I had asked earlier on these and other aspects. Even when such questions were not asked there were times when the students repeated information relating to topics that they had discussed in earlier meetings with me. This applied mostly to their experiences concerning their problems encountered in the search for work, and particularly to themes such as "experience," "qualifications," and "race." Since these data were not conflicting they were accepted as reliable.

However, two aspects which I had some doubts about were: information relating to the school-leavers' financial problems; and my observations of the activities in which these people were involved in at home and the neighbourhood. When students referred to their financial problems and circumstances of poverty, I tried to find out more about these problems and circumstances from their parents and other relatives. Some students spoke about their meagre allowances, relying on state welfare grants, high rent, water, electricity and food costs. Others referred to problems relating to the unemployment of parents, brothers and sisters. Discussions with parents and relatives confirmed much of what was reported. My general observations of the material and social circumstances of their homes gave me no reason to doubt what they had said.



As far as observations of the activities at home and the neighbourhood were concerned, I had to be sure whether or not what I saw on one or two occasions was routine. These applied especially to the domestic duties of girls, the boys' **"passing the time"** at the street corners and shopping centres, and the watching of television and listening to pop music by both boys and girls. During discussions and interviews I asked open-ended questions about how they spent their time when they were not looking for jobs. The group in domesticity referred time and again to women's household duties, while boys and girls spoke regularly about their interest in television and pop music. The open-ended discussions with some of the boys pointed to the fact that in addition to television and music, much time was spent in the company of other unemployed friends at the homes, the streets or shops. In all cases, the observations and interviews produced similar interpretations of this aspect of the lives of the school-leavers.

Caution had to be exercised in respect of information obtained through telephone conversations. When new details were given, such as promise of jobs by contacts, there was insufficient time to probe the matter further. However, I followed up these details during the next home visits to these school-leavers. In the case of ten such references to jobs, the school-leavers could not provide any further details. They then explained that they were either misinformed, misled, or that they misunderstood what their contacts had said. These segments of data had to be omitted from the content that was being analysed.

Finally there were isolated cases of a few students whose information contradicted what they said on earlier occasions. I had to question these persons closely during subsequent discussions to see how reliable their information was. For example, Logan told me he was employed as an apprentice jeweller, when in fact he got a casual job as an errand boy and cleaner. I established this when I questioned him about what his job involved. He was very unsure, and could not give me any details of the training programme. I also contacted his employer who confirmed that Logan was not an apprentice.

Then there were the cases of two students who gave conflicting views on their impressions of career-guidance lessons. On some occasions they said that these lessons were not helpful because they did not offer **"practical hints,"** and on other occasions they praised these lessons for **"advice given."** It was essential to probe such contradictions. When confronted, both explained in clearer terms that practical hints on **"how to cope with emotional strain"** during unemployment were ignored; but generally they valued the advice given on how to approach employers.

Finally, it must be remembered that much of the information contained in this chapter is based on the views presented by the school-leavers themselves. Wherever possible, these were balanced against the views of others who knew about the experiences of unemployment of these school-leavers; and these included, for example, parents, brothers, sisters and other relatives who were living with them. However, an important source of information which for practical reasons could not be easily reached was the prospective employers who had interviewed and decided not to employ them. As a result, many of the statements of the workseekers were taken at face value; which may give the impression that their plight is being presented in a very sympathetic light. However, in order to achieve some balance, details which give insight into other aspects of the school-leavers' lives have also been included. These were derived from observations during home visits, and discussions with parents, teachers, and the school-leavers about home circumstances and so on.

#### 7.4 APPLICATIONS FOR JOBS

Fifteen of the seventeen school-leavers spoke about jobs which they enquired about or actually applied for. The two who did not apply for jobs were Kalavathee and Shireen. Kalavathee got married within a month of leaving school, while Shireen was not interested in seeking employment before she got married.

The material included in this category made up 14.87 per cent of the total content which was analysed for the entire sample. All the school-leavers mentioned that they responded to newspaper advertisements, went personally to various firms, enquired,

and got to know about vacancies from friends and relatives. Two students from the practical grade were the only ones who also consulted employment agencies. The average number of jobs which the male school-leavers applied for was five. The range of applications among the females was greater. While some applied for two jobs, others applied for as many as eight.

Table 7.7 (on page 389) indicates the jobs which the school-leavers had in mind while they were in school, and the jobs which they applied for. Some of them applied for jobs which they had in mind, but when they realised that these were difficult to get they applied for other jobs. Their applications and enquiries were influenced largely by what was available. This structural influence indicates that the lower-working-class boys in both grades were being drawn towards careerless, dead-end jobs; while the attention of the upper-working-class boys was engaged by the trades and lower-clerical jobs. These are essentially jobs which Ashton and Field (1976) classified as short-term careers. The girls from all social classes applied for jobs which were typically female. The lower-working-class girls applied for both careerless, as well as short-term careers jobs, while the upper-working-class girls were interested mainly in clerical, office-type jobs. These may be regarded as lower-middle-class jobs.

While there were variations in the range of jobs mentioned by each of these groups of school-leavers, the general trend seemed to indicate that boys from the lower-working-class backgrounds were likely to get jobs similar to those which were done by their parents and relatives. Those from the upper working class were likely to get into trades, and had some chances of getting into lower-middle-class, lower-clerical jobs. On the whole, girls were most likely to get into female jobs, mainly of the lower-middle-class variety. The lower-working-class girls, however had no objections to accepting the careerless female jobs if nothing else was available. Generally, the jobs which the boys and girls applied for were those which are usually done by Indians. All of these factors point to the ways in which the decisions of the school-leavers were limited by the structural conditions of unemployment. Under these circumstances they were channelled towards jobs which are closely associated with the class, gender, and race status of the groups to which they belong.

TABLE 7.7

## JOB PREFERENCES AND APPLICATIONS FOR JOBS OF UNEMPLOYED SCHOOL-LEAVERS

SCHOOL-LEAVERS	SEX	SCHOOL	GRADE	JOB PREFERENCE WHILE IN SCHOOL	JOBS APPLIED FOR
<u>LOWER WORKING CLASS</u>					
Lennie	M.	O.L.	P.	policeman	apprentice carpenter, factory worker, handyman, counterhand, packer and despatcher
Logan	M.	O.L.	P.	bookkeeper, computer work	parking meter repairer, clerk, counterhand, cleaner and errand boy
Savy	F.	O.L.	P.	veterinary surgeon, secretary, switchboard operator, nurse-aid	security guard, nurse-aid, dress-maker, typist, receptionist, cashier, factory machinist, secretary
Asha	F.	R.	P.	nurse, secretary	nurse, receptionist, saleslady, clerk, machinist, door-to-door saleswoman
Sundrie	F.	R.	P.	clerk, secretary, nurse, meter-maid, policewoman	secretary, clerk
Raksha	F.	R.	P.	switchboard operator	secretary, cashier, switchboard operator
Juggie	M.	O.L.	O.	telephone technician, electrician	apprentice electrician, salesman, laboratory assistant, counterhand, handyman, packer and despatcher, clerk
Perumal	M.	O.L.	O.	electrical engineer, telephone technician	apprentice electrician, clerk, bookkeeper, pedestal assembler
<u>UPPER WORKING CLASS</u>					
John	M.	O.L.	P.	fitter and turner, electrician	handyman, packer and despatcher, fitter and turner, telephone technician, apprentice electrician, apprentice shopfitter
Kalavathee	F.	O.L.	P.	nurse, switchboard operator, bank teller	
Pat	M.	R.	P.	welder, computer programmer, clerk, telephone technician	fitter and turner, telephone technician, stores clerk, motor mechanic
David	M.	R.	P.	motor mechanic, fitter and turner	panel-beater's assistant, apprentice welder, fitter and turner, laboratory assistant, shank controller, sales assistant, despatcher, apprentice cabinet-maker
Ruben	M.	R.	P.	apprentice electrician, telephone technician	switchboard operator, telephone technician, shipping clerk, factory worker, packer
Jaylal	M.	O.L.	O.	telephone technician, apprentice electrician	telephone technician, apprentice electrician, shipping clerk, coding clerk, factory worker
Shireen	F.	O.L.	O.	typist, nurse, secretary, receptionist	
<u>LOWER MIDDLE CLASS</u>					
Nesan	M.	O.L.	P.	doctor, paramedical worker	telephone technician, laboratory technician, ambulanceman, apprentice cabinet-maker, data processing clerk
Suraya	F.	O.L.	O.	nurse, bank teller, computer programmer, accountant, physiotherapist	receptionist, clerk, saleslady, bank teller, temporary school-teacher

## 7.5 FRUSTRATIONS OF LOOKING FOR WORK

The unsuccessful attempts to find work was irksome to many. Fourteen school-leavers discussed the difficulty of finding work. This category made up 12.33 per cent of the total content that was analysed for the entire sample.

These school-leavers referred to many things which made it difficult and frustrating to get jobs. Amongst the things mentioned were: many wasted trips searching for jobs which were already filled. This meant spending money on bus fares, which they could not afford. They had to put up with discouraging treatment from employers and experienced frequent refusals. Sometimes they were not given straight replies but were told that they would "soon hear from the firm." However, replies were seldom received. The firms were distantly situated, and this made it difficult to travel from one firm to another. Some students did not know where the vacancies existed. They also complained that there were too many people "searching for the same jobs." Employers seemed to prefer the more experienced and better qualified workers.

Perumal's (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) account gives us some idea of the frustration of looking for work:

"There are too many people, and too few jobs. There are more people today who have matriculated and who are looking for work. When I applied for one of the jobs and went for the interview, there was a very long queue. When I saw this, my hopes of getting the job dropped. I had my fingers crossed, but was unsuccessful."

These school-leavers were also often confronted with notices of "no vacancies" on factory gates or were told abruptly to go away. David, and Asha (practical grade, Ridgemount), for example, give some indication of this.

David : "I am tired looking for jobs. Everywhere my friends and I go, we are turned down. We have spent enough money on bus fares, travelling from Northflats to Durban. It's disappointing, especially the way they sort of put you off. At some places, they take down your details and say they will let you know. But nothing happens."



Asha : "Job hunting is terrible. Most places you go to, they sort of push you away. They tell you so abruptly that there are no vacancies. When they say that to you, you don't feel like looking for another job. But things are hard and I've got to have a job."

The frustrations of looking for work affected almost the entire sample, and from their comments it appeared that they were particularly conscious of the power of employers to reject their applications in a period of high unemployment. They were also very conscious of the competition by other persons in similar positions as themselves.

It is also necessary to consider to what extent these school-leavers allowed this situation to encourage them to become lazy, and to give up looking for suitable employment. For example, Jaylal (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) seemed to be quite content spending his time earning a few rands, doing a part-time job in a tea-room near his home. He seemed to be waiting for a "good job to come up." According to him:

"I just sit around at home. I have applied for a lot of jobs but nothing has come through yet. When I've got nothing to do, I while my time in the tea-room, earning a few rands. I've been unemployed for about three months now."

His playful and casual attitude is also borne out in the reasons which he gave for wanting to leave school. One is not certain whether he adopted a similar approach in his search for work. He said:

"I was just waiting to get out of school. Now I'm happy that I'm out of school. I never used to really like school. When I was in primary school I was quite good, but when I was in high school I became a sort of drop-out. I never used to take an interest in school work. It was more play than study."

#### 7.6 UNSUITABILITY OF JOBS

Ten of these school-leavers explained that though they had applied or enquired about the jobs which they mentioned, generally they did not consider these to be suitable.

The jobs were considered to be unsuitable because: they offered poor wages; involved hard physical work; there was little or no opportunity to develop one's independence; they would be



closely watched by their supervisors; the work was boring, uninteresting and routine; it involved shift work; the school-leavers' standard of education was unsuited to that type of employment; and could best be regarded as temporary **"till something better comes along."** Several of these reasons were mentioned by the school-leavers.

For the sample as a whole, this category accounted for 4.5 per cent of the total amount of the content which was analysed. It made up 6.07 per cent of the content analysed for boys, as against 1.21 per cent for girls.

Ruben's and Lennie's (practical grade, Orchard Lane) explanations give us some idea of why these jobs were considered to be unsuitable. Lennie said:

**"Though I enquired about working in a supermarket, I don't really like that job. It is very hard work. You have to carry heavy containers of goods, pack them, clean the shelves, and so on."**

Ruben said that his relatives who worked in the furniture industry could arrange jobs which involve **"cutting, packing and stacking wood and boards,"** but he did not like doing this.

Ruben : **"I don't think for my standard of education, this is a suitable job for me. You only need about standard-five education for things like cutting up different sizes of board, measuring and so on. A person with standard-ten education should go for better-paid jobs. Jobs in the furniture and shoe factories are for the drop-outs in school."**

However, it should be noted that the school-leavers did not consider all the jobs which they applied for to be unsuitable. One of the girls, for example, explained that she had a strong desire to work for the SPCA as a nurse-aid from the time she was in school. She loved caring for animals. One of the boys said that applying for a trade was good since this was a secure job. He was happy to apply for such jobs even though he wanted to be an accountant or a computer operator. These two cases indicate that if these jobs were available, these students would have accepted them willingly.

Generally, it could be seen that these school-leavers did not like the careerless nature of the jobs which they had to apply for. However, they were prepared to take them as "temporary" jobs. This contrasts with the findings of studies such as those of Willis (1977) where the lower-working-class "lads" wanted working-class jobs; but they were also disillusioned.

## 7.7 EXPERIENCE

Since all of these school-leavers had no previous experience in work, their worst frustration was the "catch-22" of no job without experience. Twelve school-leavers spoke of their difficulties in finding work because of this.

These school-leavers said that: most employers insisted on previous experience; those who left school early and obtained jobs had the advantage of gaining such experience; they were willing to accept temporary jobs to gain the necessary experience, even if the wages were not attractive. This category accounted for 6.07 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample.

One of the frequent complaints was that employers gave preference to older, experienced workers. This is evident in Juggie's (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane), Perumal's and Suraya's (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) comments which appear below.

Juggie : "Today, it's hard to get a job without experience. You can look at how my shoes are worn out through the amount of walking I've done from one firm to another. But they are only interested in people who have had experience."

Perumal : "In most jobs they want experience. This is why I was unsuccessful. I don't feel that they are correct. Every year, you get thousands of matric students coming out of schools. If everyone wanted experience, then the matric students won't get a job."

Suraya : "At times unemployment is quite frustrating. It is quite boring at home. Wherever you go they want experience. I've just got my Senior Certificate, and no one gives you the chance to get the experience."

## 7.8 QUALIFICATIONS

Many different views were expressed on the relevance or irrelevance of qualifications. Some of these contradicted each other, while other views indicated how the students changed their minds when they had doubts about the value of qualifications.

At least thirteen school-leavers commented on qualifications, and this category made up 8.22 per cent of the total content which was analysed for the entire sample. It accounted for 9.83 per cent of the content analysed for boys, as against 4.85 per cent for girls. Another difference to note is that it constituted 8.91 per cent of the content for practical grade school-leavers, while it made up 6.58 per cent of that for the ordinary grade.

For clerical and secretarial work, and jobs in the trade, employers generally demanded matriculation, and sometimes post-matriculation qualifications. Since many of these school-leavers did not have this, they were forced to compete with better qualified and more experienced people. The comments of Asha, and John (practical grade, Orchard Lane), for example, indicate how the lack of qualifications affected their chances.

Asha : "Employers are looking for someone better. I only passed standard eight. So if they get someone with a higher level of education they take that person. I applied to be a nurse but the hospital staff told me that they do not accept practical grade students, and that matriculation is essential."

John : "At most firms the managers told me that they wanted technical trade qualifications. They wanted at least three years experience as an apprentice, and a three-year trade qualification. Lots of firms also wanted ordinary grade qualifications. They were not happy to take people with practical grade. If I had an ordinary grade certificate, they would have financed me to study part-time for the National Technical Certificate."

Six of these school-leavers felt that matriculation was essential if "decent" jobs were to be obtained. They said that most advertisements for "good" jobs state that matriculation is the minimum, educational requirement. For example, one of the practical

grade students said that if he had obtained higher qualifications it would have been possible for him to become a teacher. He regretted not having switched from the practical grade to the ordinary grade in standard eight. One of the ordinary grade school-leavers said that someone had "fixed" him a job at the bank, but he did not get it since he "didn't get through matric." Another school-leaver, Perumal said that though he was unemployed he felt it was worth going up to standard ten.

**"At least I got some education. My chances are good for getting a job, although I'm unemployed at the moment. For most of the jobs they want educated people. The adverts in the newspaper ask for matriculation students."**

However, the experience of unemployment made many of these school-leavers feel that their qualifications were not worth very much. Their perceptions of the job market led them to place little value on qualifications. It was in these circumstances that some of these school-leavers expressed conflicting views. While on the one hand people like Ruben valued qualifications, on the other they felt that qualifications were not of much use since they no longer offered a guarantee of jobs. Ruben's comments reflect the tension which he experienced:

**"Unemployment is like being hit by a disaster. You might as well leave school in standard six and work in a shoe factory. Quite a few of the pupils in my class left school in standard seven and eight. One of those who failed in standard seven is now a qualified electrician. Another is a qualified mechanic. Every year it's going to be more difficult to get jobs, and the highest standard of education will mean nothing unless you wish to become a teacher, or lawyer, and so on."**

There were also doubts about the relevance of the Matriculation Certificate to the kinds of jobs which were available. For example, some felt that those who were in standard eight should not hesitate to get into one of the trades if these were available. There was no point in waiting to complete standard ten. Higher qualifications are necessary only if one is aspiring to a professional job. Ruben explained why he thought that certificates were not all that important for the kinds of jobs for which he was forced to apply:

"I don't think that certificates are important for the kinds of jobs we are seeking. Technical training would have been better than the type of education that we got at Ridgemount. People who are waiting for office jobs are making a great mistake. I waited for an office job, and sat at home for about half the year. I lost interest in waiting for an office job."

Three school-leavers also felt that "contacts" and "experience" were more important than qualifications. According to one of them, "a diploma is not necessary" for non-skilled jobs.

However, despite these doubts several of the working-class school-leavers, and both lower-middle-class school-leavers believed that their chances of obtaining "better-paid" jobs would ultimately depend upon obtaining higher qualifications. The dilemma which they faced was that, while on the one hand it was important to strive for improved qualifications, on the other unemployment resulted in too many certificates and too few jobs available.

#### 7.9 RACE

Nine school-leavers discussed race as a factor affecting their chances of getting jobs. These school-leavers were conscious of the fact that they are persons of colour in a White-dominated society. This category accounted for 2.94 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample. It made up 5.26 per cent of the content analysed for ordinary grade students, as against 1.95 per cent for practical grade. For the two schools, this category made up 3.92 per cent for school-leavers from Orchard Lane, as against 1.46 per cent for those from Ridgemount.

The jobs which these school-leavers applied for are those which are essentially "Indian" in terms of the racial structure of the labour market. This includes the semi-skilled and lower-middle-class jobs, and apprenticeships. When applying for such jobs they did not encounter open competition from members of other race groups, and particularly from Whites. It was only in a few jobs like apprentice electrician and post office technician, that these school-leavers competed with other races, and met people from these groups at interviews. The comments on race discrimination that came through clearly in this analysis were



mainly with reference to these few occasions when boys from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane applied for such jobs. However, the one fact which all nine school-leavers emphasised was that of race stipulation in newspaper advertisements for jobs. One of the boys, for example, was so conscious of the racial segmentation of the labour market that even when an advertisement did not state that the job was "reserved," he mentioned in his application that he is an "Asiatic male of eighteen years."

Juggie and Jaylal were quite emphatic in their belief that White school-leavers were given preference over Indians; and that White employers were more relaxed, informal and sympathetic when interviewing White school-leavers. This can be judged from their remarks below.

Juggie : "When I applied for a job at a motor firm, the White person asked me a few questions, and was willing to take me on. But another White person said they will let me know later on. Maybe it was because of my colour. If a White was interviewed, I am sure he would have got the job straight-away. I saw this happen before. When I applied for a job at the Corporation, they took most of the Whites, and very few Indians, especially those with experience. My cousin who works at the Corporation told me that the majority of the Whites didn't have experience. At interviews, they ask the Indians very difficult questions. They stump you right from the start. But when the Whites use a few high words, the bosses are really impressed. They get the jobs."

Jaylal : "When I applied for a job at the Corporation, there were a lot of Indians, Coloureds, Africans and Whites who were interviewed. But I think the Whites must have stood a better chance because today the Whites have all the say. Some Whites who do the interviewing and selection wouldn't like to give others a break. They like to give their own group a chance first."

Ruben and his friends who went looking for work outside of Durban were also confronted with the problem of race. They found that employers at Richards Bay were reluctant to take on Indians because there was no provision for housing for members of this race group. Ruben said:

"My friends and I went to Richards Bay to about eight factories, and we were



turned down by all. They wanted Africans and Whites. There was no housing provision for Indians. We were told that at the beginning of next year a new housing project will be started for Indians, and only then will they consider employing Indians."

Judging from the kinds of jobs which they enquired about or applied for it was clear that their race had much to do with the kinds of jobs which were on offer. The racial structuring of the labour market is one of several factors which may explain why these school-leavers came to take for granted that only certain categories of jobs were within their reach, and more especially during a period of high unemployment.

#### 7.10 GENDER

Only three school-leavers referred to gender and its effects on their chances of getting employment. The discussion on gender accounted for only 0.78 per cent of the total content that was analysed for the entire sample. Savy and Perumal indicated that they were refused certain jobs because these were reserved for the opposite sex. Each cited just one instance of this. Savy applied for a job to service machines at a clothing factory, while Perumal applied for a clerical job. Below is the account given by Savy of her enquiry about this job.

Savy : "It is difficult to get a job since we are not the breadwinners. Even if we can do certain jobs, the employers want men. At one of the clothing factories I went to, they wanted only males to service the sewing machines. My cousin who was with me told the chargehand, 'Show us any part of the machine, and we will fix it for you.' In schools, we used to help the home economics teacher to fix the sewing machines. So why can't we do it in the factory?"

Savy also mentioned that it was difficult to get better-paid, higher-status jobs such as senior clerks; but it was easier to get lower-paid jobs like saleslady or counterhand. Since Pat felt that his name was the same as that of a girl, he had to mention in all his letters of application for jobs that he is a male. He seemed to believe that the male jobs for which he applied are completely closed to females.

During the time that Savy was unemployed, she waited anxiously to get a job as a cashier at a nearby supermarket. However, her fiancé disapproved of this since it was **"not good for females to work outside of the family circle."** She accepted this ruling and looked forward to assisting the family with its mobile business. In a sense, this decision of Savy contributed to her subservient position in the labour market; though somewhat reluctantly, she seemed to accept the subordinate role which she was called upon to play.

Judging from the kinds of jobs which the male and female school-leavers applied for, it was clear that each of these groups was drawn towards gender typical jobs. The ideology of a patriarchal society seemed to be at work; and also given the strong distinction between the status of males and females in the Indian community, one is in a better position to understand why each group was drawn towards gender stereotyped jobs.

#### 7.11 CONTACTS

Besides answering newspaper advertisements, and enquiring personally at various firms, several school-leavers mentioned that they relied on contacts. This included family members and friends who promised to help them to find employment. Those who did not have **"good contacts"** had to depend more on their own unassisted efforts.

Twelve school-leavers mentioned specifically the use of contacts. This category comprised 6.65 per cent of the total amount of data analysed for the entire sample; and made up 7.80 per cent of the content analysed for boys, as against 4.24 per cent for girls.

Those who were looking for some kind of trade found the use of contacts to be a useful strategy. The practical grade, working-class boys in particular referred to this. Lennie's beliefs in contacts, for example, is illustrated in these remarks:

"One of my friends spoke to his foreman who asked him to bring me along. It was for a welding job. Contacts are useful because they are people who have worked long in a firm, and who know the foremen and the managers very well. They can use their influence. Many of my friends and relatives got jobs in this way."

Some of these school-leavers spoke of contacts who were willing to get them temporary jobs. Two boys said that they worked briefly in jobs which were fixed through friends. Pat who felt strongly about the use of contacts said:

"Today, it's not what you know, it's who you know. If you know someone who is a foreman or supervisor, and he speaks for you, you have a better chance. In most cases, if you have a contact, the job is yours. I saw this at a number of firms I went to. The chaps wait at the gate, and their friends or relatives come and call for them. Through these connections they get the jobs. This is why I am trying for contacts."

David who found it difficult to get a decent job said:

"Even though I did well in school, I'm still finding it hard to get a good permanent job. The best thing is to get a contact."

Specific references were also made to the use of their brothers, sisters, parents and neighbours in the search for work. One of the boys spoke of a brother in the shipping industry who was going to fix him a good job with "security and housing benefits." A neighbour of one of the girls arranged to get her a job as a temporary cardex clerk. Another girl spoke of one of her neighbours who got a job for a friend who "wasn't qualified." This seemed to convince her that "since searching for jobs is very difficult, contacts are important."

David and Ruben discussed whether contacts or educational qualifications were important in terms of unemployment. Their views are quoted.

David : "These days you need contacts. Most people believe in contacts. If you don't have contacts, then that's your problem. When we go for certain jobs, we know of people with lower qualifications who get them. They have the right contacts. But besides contacts, you need some education. For example, you may need to be good at figures. You just don't know where your luck is."

Ruben : "When my friends and I went to Richards Bay searching for jobs, some of the workers we met in the factories told us 'your matric certificates mean nothing here. It's not what you know, it's who you know.' I think they are right. Paper qualifications will get you nowhere today. The main thing is experience, and who you know. Contacts are very important. I know a lot of people who get jobs through contacts."

When it is difficult to get work, these working-class school-leavers, especially the boys, place a heavier reliance on the practical means of securing a job, such as through the use of contacts. In these circumstances, the belief in contacts is more important than their belief in qualifications.

Though several of the lower-working-class families were hard working, in some cases the instability at home did not provide the opportunity for establishing "the right contacts." This was particularly so in the case of two school-leavers who had to change residence frequently; unlike some of the upper-working-class families where parents who were in the skilled trades, and who were considered to be reliable workers, established better contacts. Some of their children actually got jobs in this way.

#### 7.12 SUB-EMPLOYMENT

As in the case of Roberts's (1984) study, several of the school-leavers who could have easily got semi-skilled work in times of full employment, now faced sub-employment or unemployment. Before they could get some kind of permanent work, they got casual, part-time jobs for periods ranging from a few days to about two months.

Thirteen school-leavers were engaged in such temporary casual jobs. These were lowly-paid and routine jobs, and these school-leavers regarded them as temporary. Some were also engaged in making and selling articles and goods at their homes. This was a form of self-employment. This category made up 5.28 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample.

A description of some of their work activities in sub-employment shows how close this comes to Ashton and Field's (1976) careerless-type jobs. John worked for a week as a packer and despatcher at a firm that manufactured musical instruments. Later he worked as an assistant at a shopfitting firm for three weeks. In between looking for work, he also helped his brother-in-law at home to make wall units and cabinets. Logan was an errand boy and cleaner in a small jewellery shop for about two months. Nesan (practical grade, Orchard Lane) worked as a data processing clerk for about one month before he became redundant. Savy had an old sewing machine at home, which she used to make child-



ren's outfits. She sold these to people in the neighbourhood.

Juggie was a packer at a supermarket for one month but did not like this job because "it was too easy." He also welded silencers at home, and earned about fifteen rands for each job done. Jaylal worked as a counterhand and packer in a tea-room for about two months. Perumal was employed at a brick company as a stock-taker for three weeks. Suraya got a job as a saleslady at a sports shop for one week.

Pat was employed for two weeks as a stores clerk, but left because of "transport difficulties." He also helped his father to run a gambling school at home. David worked for one week as a panel-beater, and also made and sold bookshelves from his home. Ruben got a job for one month as a switchboard operator, but left because he did not like "shift work." Asha worked as a factory machinist, a sales assistant, and door-to-door saleswoman. Each job lasted for about two months. Sundrie worked as a cardex clerk for about three weeks.

These were largely lowly-paid, routine and monotonous occupations. For example, Jaylal had to "pack goods, walk up and down to the stock-room, serve customers, and unpack the fridge." Juggie had to "check and count goods, mark prices on articles, and clean the shelves." Many of these school-leavers disliked these jobs and "just filled in time." Asha waited till she could get "something clerical," while Perumal wanted a trade. John did not like packing and stamping goods, and David was "fed up" with the way he was "pushed around." He also complained about the fragmented nature of his work. He said:

"The boss never gave us time to settle down. We were new, and he started putting the pressure on. When we are doing a certain job, suddenly he takes us out from there, and tells us to do something else. We work fast, but he still says 'come on, work faster!'"

Suraya did not like being a sales assistant since this was unsuited to her level of education. She said:

"I don't want this casual job to become permanent. I want a clerical job where I can use my education."

However, the fact that some of these school-leavers gave up their jobs because of "transport difficulties," or because they did not like "shift work" would seem to suggest that they were taking the easy way out. Since they themselves complained about being discriminated against by employers because of the "lack of experience," one would have expected them to have used this opportunity to gain the necessary experience till they were able to get "better jobs."

### 7.13 FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Unemployment is generally linked to lack of finance and poverty. There are also the additional pressures and strains that unemployment and poverty place on family life.

Eleven school-leavers referred to financial and associated problems. This category accounted for 5.87 per cent of the total amount of data analysed for the entire sample. It comprised 7.27 per cent of content analysed for girls, as against 5.20 per cent for boys. For the practical grade, it made up 6.41 per cent of the content, while for the ordinary grade it was 4.61 per cent.

Some of these school-leavers had to rely on meagre allowances from their parents who themselves were in receipt of state welfare grants. The pressures of unemployment and poverty were summed up by David when he said:

**"If you come from a poor family, unemployment seems to be a hunger for financial needs."**

Asha and Logan were forced on more than one occasion to seek accommodation with friends and relatives because of strained relationships with their parents. They often ended up living in conditions of poverty. Asha explains how this state of homelessness affected her chances of getting a steady job.

Asha : "I was boarding with some people, and one weekend they wanted to lock the house since they were going away. I had to work overtime that weekend and I had no place to stay. I was forced to seek accommodation elsewhere. At present I'm staying with my friends. But there are also problems here. Sometimes the landlord gets drunk and he swears at me. There are times when he even chases me out of the house at night, and threatens to hit me. But for the



moment I just have to put up with this since I am unemployed. I sleep on the floor of the bedroom with the two daughters. Their parents sleep in the kitchen. I'll try to further my studies and get a good job. Then I can find better accommodation."

In some cases the problems of deprivation were even greater, especially when other members of the family were also unemployed. Five school-leavers came from such homes. Savy's brother and brother-in-law, for example, were unemployed for periods of eight months, and one year respectively. Her father was retired and had stayed at home for the last five years. Members of Jaylal's family also experienced unemployment and sub-employment. His sister who had just matriculated found it difficult to get a job. There were times when his father who is a cartage contractor had no work for three or four months at a stretch. As a result, his mother who was previously a housewife was forced to take on a job as a factory machinist.

Though they were struggling to make ends meet, when better housing became available, two families chose to give up their cheaper accommodation in Lyndale and Bombay Heights and move into the large township of Northflats. This was about thirty kilometres from the city centre, and meant increased bus fares. Rent, electricity and water bills were also more than doubled. Even though the new accommodation was more comfortable, the increased costs burdened the family with greater financial strain.

However, it was not always easy to establish whether there was genuine poverty or not. I was doubtful because one of the school-leavers and his friends, for example, were able to hire video cassettes and watch them during an entire morning; another was able to buy drugs regularly, and a third one placed bets on horses for his father. However, on balance, when the sample as a whole was considered, there was sufficient evidence to suggest that there was much poverty, and it was under these conditions that these school-leavers were driven towards sub-employment, and would "accept anything till something better comes along."

7.14 ISOLATION AND BOREDOM

Since unemployment and the lack of finance excludes young people from many forms of modern leisure pursuits, they tend to become isolated and home-bound. It is in the home and the immediate neighbourhood where they live out conditions of boredom and isolation.

Ten school-leavers spoke of such experiences and conditions. This category accounted for 3.91 per cent of the total content that was analysed for the entire sample. It made up 5.26 per cent of the content for the ordinary grade, as against 3.34 per cent for the practical grade.

The frustration of searching in vain for jobs led to the aimless street corner activity of some of the lower-working-class boys in particular to relieve their boredom. Feelings of social isolation led to meetings in shopping centres, bus ranks and tea-rooms. One of the most intense activities in which these boys were absorbed was that of "passing the time." This is similar to Corrigan's (1977:103) description of the youth culture, "doing nothing." These school-leavers passed their time "just standing around," "talking about things" and "joking."

One of them spoke openly about "getting up late each morning, joining his friends at a nearby tea-room, playing the slot machine, and hanging around." Another explained that many of his friends who could not find jobs were attracted "to the street corner and learnt bad habits."

Those who spent much of their time at home listened to pop music on the radio, watched television, and met with other unemployed friends. For example, Jaylal said:

"I have friends who are also unemployed, and we meet at each other's homes. There are a lot of people who got through their standard ten, but who are sitting around, doing nothing. Since my friends and I can't get jobs, we don't have much to do. So we spend the time watching films on video. Yesterday we watched three films."

However, one cannot be certain as to how much of this "passing the time," the street corner activity, and listening to pop

music was merely an outlet for activity because of the frustration of finding jobs; or whether it was the result of laziness and a desire for the fast life. If it were the latter, then this could probably lead us to conclude that some of these school-leavers did not make a determined effort to look for suitable employment.

#### 7.15 DOMESTICITY AND MARRIAGE

The girls who found it difficult to get work spent much of their time at home going through the routine of female duties. Generally they found life at home boring, and like the boys they listened to pop music and watched television. They also read novels and visited friends to pass the time. For many young, unemployed Indian females there are few acceptable venues outside the home. This makes them more home-bound than males and less involved in outside activities.

When unemployment is severely felt girls who are drawn towards "housework" tend to see their future primarily in terms of marriage. They appear to be more likely than boys to abandon their first choice of jobs, and to lower their sights when obstacles arise. Many of them seem to retreat into domesticity. Views on domesticity and marriage were expressed by six female school-leavers. This category made up 4.89 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample, and 15.15 per cent of content for girls.

All of these girls were engaged in some kind of "housework." For example, much of the time of one of these girls was taken up by having to take care of her sister's little children, with cleaning, washing and cooking for the family. In addition to routine, household duties, another girl had to take care of her disabled father. It was not long before five of these girls decided to marry. One of them got married soon after leaving school in standard ten. The others remained at home for about one year before they did so. They were keen to seek employment after marriage, but were put off by their future husbands. They seemed to have some doubts as to whether it was more important to be a housewife or a working wife, but finally seemed to lean more heavily towards household duties. This is reflected in the views of Sundrie and Savy.

Sundrie : "My future husband says he can support me. If he can I wouldn't go to work. If I happen to be at work, things will be neglected at home. He feels that way and I agree with him. But it is also boring to be at home."

Savy : "If I go to work I know I'll have the money to help my husband if anything happens to him. But if your husband is earning good money and he wants you to look after the children, then you can stay at home and look after the children. But if I get married, I like to get a job. This will help both of us."

However, Savy was prepared to undertake domestic duties, as well as to help with her future family's "mobile business" in Northflats. She said:

"Though I'm not used to this type of work, I have to help the family that I'm getting married into. I have to consider two things, running the business, and doing housework. Housework comes first. My future husband's brother's wife is working and her children are at home. I will have to take care of them."

Shireen, who left school at the beginning of standard ten and stayed at home, did not want to look for employment, because her father disapproved. However, she was prepared to go to work after she got married. She said:

"I didn't want to go and look for work because my father used to say as long as he is around, he won't allow me to work. I like being at home, and I don't go out much. My father will support me as long as I'm living here, but once I get married and leave home, I may go out to work."

Such comments seem to suggest that although these female school-leavers looked forward to getting into some form of employment, they were willing to accept the subordinate role of housewife and mother as defined by their parents and their future husbands.

#### 7.16 GUILT AND DEPRESSION

Feelings of stigma and shame were expressed by eleven school-leavers. Some said that these feelings became more intense when they were criticised by other family members for not being able to get a job. They felt depressed at the thought that it would be quite some time before a job came up. There was also a general feeling of guilt that they were unable to contribute to the family income.

This category made up 3.72 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample. For the boys, it made up 4.33 per cent;

for the girls it constituted only 2.43 per cent. It also made up a greater proportion of the material analysed for the practical grade (4.18 per cent), than for the ordinary grade (2.63 per cent).

These school-leavers were especially sensitive to the inferior status of the unemployed. Feelings of depression were expressed by almost every one. David, for example, said:

"I feel very bad about being unemployed. You don't have a cent with you. You can't go out anywhere because you have no money. You can't dress up well, and most of the time you are alone at home. No one wants to join you because you got no money."

Four school-leavers said that they felt particularly guilty that they were unable to contribute to the family income, especially when they thought of the sacrifices made by their parents to educate them. They were unhappy at the thought that they could not give something in return, especially since there were younger children who had to be provided for, and like themselves had to be kept in school till standard ten. Thoughts such as, "what if I never get a job?", "What am I going to make of life?" frequently crossed their minds.

Comments such as, "it is sad to think that you are losing out as time is going by," were typical of those who felt depressed at the thought of long-term unemployment. This state of mind led some students to ask why they had "left school at such an early age if jobs are so difficult to get." Then there were also those who felt ashamed that they had to rely on others to provide them with food, shelter, clothing and expenses since the time they had left school.

Despite these feelings, and the difficulties experienced, there was a general determination not to give up hope. One of the boys summed this up by saying: "I will be left with nothing if I give up the search for jobs." One of the girls said that she "just couldn't stop and say 'I had enough!'" She was prepared to take "anything in the meantime" as long as she was "provided with a little."



7.17 LOWERING OF CAREER ASPIRATIONS

The general decline in job opportunities meant a lowering in the career aspirations for at least ten school-leavers. This category accounted for 3.72 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample; and it comprised 4.33 per cent of the content analysed for boys, as against 2.43 per cent of content for girls. This category also accounted for a larger percentage of the content analysed for school-leavers from Ridgemount (4.88 per cent) than was the case for those from Orchard Lane (2.94 per cent).

Ruben, for example, was prepared to abandon his hopes of becoming a telephone technician or an apprentice electrician, and to **"settle for next best such as a switchboard operator, or packer and despatcher."** Lennie who was keen to join the police force was prepared to apply for jobs such as packer and despatcher. Savy was unsuccessful in her application for a job as a nurse-aid, and was now willing to be a cashier at a supermarket or a factory machinist. Nesan who wanted some kind of professional job realised that his lack of qualifications, as well as the scarcity of jobs made this impossible. He was prepared to abandon these aspirations in the short-term at least, and to look for jobs like laboratory technician and ambulance-man. Even Juggie and Jaylal who were keen on becoming telephone technicians or electricians were prepared to settle for factory work, and packers in supermarkets.

While Pat was in school, he wanted to get a job as a telephone technician or in the computer field. However, the frustrations of being unemployed led to his search for jobs like stores clerk and motor mechanic.

He justified this on the grounds that **"you can't be fussy since at the moment unemployment is very tight."** David also held similar views:

**"If I get any other job I'll take it, until I get a good job. I would like to get a job as a clerk, but in the meantime I'm prepared to take whatever I get."**

However, all of these school-leavers made it clear that these



jobs would be temporary, and did express other long-term preferences. Nevertheless, the experience of prolonged unemployment and alternating between short-term, dead-end stultifying jobs diminished the quality of life for many of them.

#### 7.18 PREFERENCE FOR MANUAL JOBS

The lower- and upper-working-class boys showed a long-term preference for manual jobs. Seven school-leavers expressed such preferences. This category accounted for 2.55 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample, and it was only boys who showed a preference for manual jobs. This category made up 3.76 per cent of all content analysed for boys.

Four boys made it clear that a trade was better than an office job because **"there's more money in it."** One of them felt that a trade is a secure job which will enable one to **"start one's own business at a later stage."** Another advised those who wanted such jobs to further their studies at the technikon so that they could make these their permanent occupations. Two of the practical grade school-leavers preferred jobs such as carpentry, motor mechanics, and technician because **"the money is good, and there's more money in a trade as you build up."** Another reason is that it's **"good to work with your hands."** Jaylal who liked **"working with his hands"** drew a careful distinction between manual and mental jobs. This was the basis on which he opted for a trade instead of an office job. He said:

"I want to look for a good, permanent job. I definitely want to be a technician in the Post Office. This is a good trade. Lots of other companies also employ technicians. I know if I get the experience I'll get on well. I don't want to do anything clerical. Even, if I have to take a clerical job I don't think I'll last there long. I'll keep on applying for a technician's job till I am successful. Once you are in a trade, you stand a better chance of getting other jobs in that field."

#### 7.19 PREFERENCE FOR NON-MANUAL JOBS

The preference for non-manual, especially clerical, office jobs was expressed by nine school-leavers, mainly girls. This category accounted for 3.13 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample, and made up 7.27 per cent of the content analysed for girls. It made up 1.16 per cent of content analysed for boys.

Four girls and one boy were keen to get clerical, and secretarial jobs because of the pay, security, and fringe benefits. One of them, Savy, however was concerned mainly with the pay. This contrasts sharply with the middle-class view that office jobs are good because they involve mental work. Savy said:

"Most of my cousins say that office jobs are better than factory work. The pay is more. If you work in a factory you just sit at a machine and earn about forty-five rands a week. That's not enough. In an office job, you can earn more than two hundred and fifty rands a month. Some of my cousins have such office jobs."

However, Asha who is also from a lower-working-class background did not perceive non-manual work strictly in terms of money. For her it was also a means of getting some status, independence, and opportunity for promotion. This is clear from her comparison of a clerical job with that of door-to-door saleswoman which she had taken. She said:

"A clerical job is something that people look up to, but this job of selling cosmetics from door to door is low. You feel as if you are just an outcast, just another person walking in the street. In a clerical job, you know you can get a promotion or something like that."

Two school-leavers from the lower middle class wanted non-manual jobs because of the social status attached to, and the mental nature of this type of work. One of them, Suraya didn't like her temporary, casual job of sales assistant because:

"... it is meant for someone without experience, and who hasn't got a good education. You don't have to use your brains so much. It's more physical activity. I want a clerical job so that I can use my mind. I can't just become a cashier or something like that. This will mean that my education is wasted. It's best for me to get a job where I can use my education."

Even though he obtained a practical grade qualification, Nesan the other school-leaver hoped that one day he would obtain a matriculation ordinary grade certificate through part-time study because:

"With an ordinary grade matric I can do medicine. I want to be someone in the family. It may take a long time, but it will mean success to me."

7.20 FURTHER STUDIES

Nine of the school-leavers wanted to pursue some form of further education as a means of improving their chances of getting jobs. This category accounted for 4.11 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample, and made up 6.67 per cent of the content analysed for girls. It comprised 2.89 per cent of the total content analysed for boys.

The two middle-class school-leavers were keen to study at a tertiary education institution. During the period that she was unemployed, Suraya attended an evening and weekend course in credit control and management at the technikon. However, eventually she hoped to enrol as a full-time student at the technikon or college of education. She said:

"I like to study computer programming. The world is progressing with computers. I will not want to give up studying. Today, education is very important. Without education, you cannot get a good job. To know what's happening in this world you got to have education."

The desire to obtain some kind of qualification through part-time study was expressed by the working-class girls. They felt that this would enable them to get office jobs. One of them wanted to take a course in **"typing and switchboard"** because she found that for most office jobs employers wanted girls with experience in these areas. However, she could enrol for such a course only if her brother could find a job and finance her. He was unemployed for over a year. On the other hand, despite her poor financial circumstances, another of these girls was able to save money from her limited allowance to enrol for a short secretarial course. A third student wanted to take a correspondence course to complete standard ten.

Two of the working-class boys wanted to enrol for short-term courses in welding and electronics at the technikon, but like some of the girls they did not have the money to do so. David's father, for example, was the only one in his family who was employed, and much of his monthly income was spent on rent, light and water bills.

## 7.21 CAREER GUIDANCE

Fourteen school-leavers spoke about career guidance in relation to their search for work. Nine felt that these lessons were not of much use. The five who saw them in a positive light felt that the hints given on how to approach one's future employer were useful.

This category accounted for 6.46 per cent of the total content analysed for the entire sample. It also made up 9.21 per cent of the content for the ordinary grade, as against 5.29 per cent for the practical grade.

Of those who felt that career-guidance lessons were not of much value, two boys felt that these were geared mostly to the needs of brighter students. **"There wasn't much for the average and below average."** Perumal and Juggie felt that the emphasis placed on criteria such as dress, speech, manners, and personality were not relevant to their search for work.

Perumal : "Most guidance lessons taught us about how to present oneself at the interview, about one's appearance, etc. At the moment this is of no use to me. The interviews haven't come up. These lessons didn't focus on the problems of unemployment. The discussions were mainly on personality, and how to apply for jobs."

Juggie : "How one dresses is not so important for the jobs which I applied for. When I went for the interview for the job of fitter and turner, a few of the others who applied wore ties. But there were also others in tattered and torn overalls. These were the people who stood a good chance. For some other jobs, I went well dressed, but the employers were more interested in guys who looked a little muscular. They looked at your hands and build in general."

For Savy, guidance lessons were boring, and "not relevant to the type of job you are going to get when you leave school." Four boys also felt that discussions in these lessons were "outside" the students' range of "experiences." Some even said that the actual interviews they attended were very different from the picture created during these lessons.

By contrast, those who commented on the positive aspects of career guidance did not find much difficulty in accepting the teachers' emphasis on speech, dress, manners and so on. John's



description of the reception he got from the manager of one of the firms he visited gives an indication of why he valued this aspect of careers lessons:

"When I went to a shopfitting firm, I had my shirt hanging out. The manager stared at me, and I tucked my shirt in. I also had my hands in my pockets. From his looks, I knew he didn't like this, so I quickly took my hands out. Our guidance teacher spoke to us about how to present ourselves to our employers. I thought of this."

One of the girls also commented on these aspects in a positive way, but in addition, she felt that these lessons should also focus on how to cope with feelings of frustration and isolation during periods of unemployment.

## 7.22 CONCLUSION

The fact that seventeen of the twenty-five school-leavers in this study had some experience of unemployment or domesticity suggests that the transition into work was not straightforward. Because they were unemployed, many of these school-leavers were compelled to alter and modify some of their earlier decisions concerning their choice of jobs. The experiences of unemployment and domesticity were also linked with the processes of production and reproduction. This is evident in the socialisation, and the preparation of some school-leavers, especially the lower-working-class boys for careerless jobs; the preparation of girls for female-orientated jobs, domesticity, and entry into marriage; and the channelling of both boys and girls towards jobs which are typically "Indian." It was also under the conditions of unemployment that the working-class school-leavers developed new insights about the relevance of qualifications, the value of careers guidance given in school; and consequently produced new interpretations about their career directions.

This reproduction process involved not only the ill effects of the social structures on a determined group of school-leavers who seemed to be defeated at every turn in their search for work. The actions of these persons seemed also to contribute to their fate. The few glimpses that we get of instability due to homelessness, indulgence in drugs, betting, street corner activity, and "doing nothing" seem to suggest that their culture (as evident in these behaviour patterns) also accounted to some extent for their plight.

However, generally, poverty and worklessness characterised the collective condition of unemployment for many of the working-class school-leavers. They did not experience only wagelessness, and dependence on their families, but also alienation, depression and feelings of guilt. While there were differences in the ways in which certain individuals responded to this crisis, and there were also qualitative differences between some subgroups in this sample, nevertheless some general patterns were evident. In the main, these were related to class, race and gender.

The frustration of looking for work in vain was the main reality for almost the entire group, and in several cases led to isolation, boredom and the lowering of aspirations. These school-leavers were keenly aware that when there is a severe shortage of jobs, employers could afford to be selective. This meant competing with older, more experienced, and also more qualified jobseekers; and joblessness meant depending on others for financial support. To this general picture, can be added the experiences of the two school-leavers who faced severe problems of homelessness, and five in whose homes there were other family members who were also unemployed. Joblessness, homelessness, dependency, and poverty were some of the conditions which were lived out through aimlessness and "doing nothing" by at least ten school-leavers.

The students' perceptions and cultural interpretations of their material circumstances enable us to get some understanding of the ways in which they reacted to the conditions of unemployment. Many of them had to lower their sights and think about new careers. Not only was the quality of life diminished for many of these working-class school-leavers, but they were also driven into sub-employment and had to lower their aspirations.

The changes in the students' perceptions can also be explained by their changing beliefs about the value of educational qualifications, and of career guidance given in school. While most of them accepted the fact that matriculation was essential to get "decent" jobs, other perceptions crept in, which led them to believe that qualifications did not have much value. Their experiences led them to realise that under conditions of unemployment, even matriculation qualification no longer guaranteed a good job; and certainly was not really necessary for the kinds of jobs which they were compelled to apply for.



While there were divided opinions about the value of careers guidance given in school, more of these school-leavers saw little practical value in such advice in their search for work. Unlike the few working-class school-leavers who valued the typical middle-class advice on how to dress, speak and be well mannered during interviews, others rejected this in the light of what they experienced. It was mainly the working-class boys who were keen on entering a trade, who saw greater benefit in using **"contacts"** or gaining **"experience"** by accepting temporary or casual employment in lower-paid and lower-status jobs. These were more important than striving for qualifications or heeding advice given in guidance lessons. Some of the working-class girls did not mind abandoning long-term goals if they could gain work experience through sub-employment. This would enable them to get better jobs once conditions improved.

Under the strain of unemployment, several of these school-leavers, especially the lower-working-class boys were drawn towards careerless jobs. This was evident not only in the enquiries and applications which they made, but also in their experience of careerless working conditions in the casual jobs which they obtained. There were a few students, however, who got clerical jobs. The entire group was not keen to let careerless or dead-end jobs become permanent. They did not mind getting into skilled trades, or clerical and secretarial jobs.

Sex discrimination was hardly mentioned as an obstacle to finding work. Gender seemed to operate in more subtle ways. Both boys and girls applied for jobs which were customarily reserved for their respective groups. Under the influence of the ideology of a patriarchal society, they were drawn towards gender typical jobs. The girls in particular were interested mainly in female, clerical, secretarial jobs.

However, the effects of gender were more clearly visible in the activities of the group in domesticity. These girls were confined mainly to their homes when the possibilities of getting work seemed remote. Much of their time was taken up with typical, female household duties, and this prepared them for a future in domesticity. Though there was not much evidence to suggest

that they sought refuge in marriage to escape the effects of unemployment, their views on marriage suggest that domestic duties took precedence over careers. They would seek employment only if their husbands approved, and some even said **"housework comes first."**

As in the case of gender, very few school-leavers mentioned racial discrimination as an obstacle which was directly encountered. However, many of them were reminded of racial discrimination mainly by newspaper advertisements. This directed their attention towards jobs which they knew were customarily occupied by Indians. The racial structure of the labour market in South Africa is one of several factors which may account for why many of these school-leavers took for granted that only certain categories of jobs were within their reach, and more so during a period of high unemployment.

Despite the struggle to find suitable employment, and a temporary lowering of aspirations, a striking feature of several school-leavers was their determination not to give up hope. This was especially evident in the remarks of both boys and girls to equip themselves for **"better"** jobs which would be available once unemployment receded. Many of the working-class boys, for example, showed a strong preference to get into skilled-manual jobs such as the trades, while girls aimed for lower-middle-class, clerical jobs. The two lower-middle-class school-leavers wanted non-manual, professional jobs to suit their educational levels. In order to achieve these goals, many of these school-leavers wished to pursue some form of further education. The working-class girls, for example, wanted to enrol for short-term secretarial courses, while the upper-working-class boys wished to study technical and **trade-related** courses. Both lower-middle-class school-leavers wanted to attend tertiary education institutions. From this it can be seen that, despite unemployment, ambition and the desire to succeed is a strong feature of the culture of this group of school-leavers. This stems from Indian culture.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

As each chapter has its own specific conclusion, the summary presented in this chapter is a synthesis of some of the broader issues which emerged. In general terms, this study addressed itself to two important, but related areas: the transition from school to work; and the situation of Indians in South Africa. By bringing these two together, this chapter focusses on the important trends that were observed among the school-leavers, firstly in the two schools and two grades; and then in respect of life-styles as reflected through class, race and gender. This is followed by an attempt to offer an explanation of the transitional process, and to set this in the context of some other well known studies which have already been undertaken in this and related fields. Finally, there are suggestions for future research in South Africa.

Though the concern is almost exclusively with a discussion on the school-leavers who were the main focus of this study, this chapter gives some attention to the tertiary education group which was used at several stages for purposes of comparison.

#### 8.2 THE MODE OF ENQUIRY

The longitudinal nature of this study made it necessary to use a variety of qualitative research techniques, more especially because of the changing and complex nature of the transitional process in which the school-leavers were involved. Initially, the main method of enquiry that was proposed was the observation of the students' actions in different settings. However, as the study progressed, it became clear that on its own, this technique was inadequate and had to be supplemented with a combination of other methods, such as group discussions and unstructured interviews - an approach which proved to be successful, since it enabled me to place the actions that were observed in the context of wider social influences referred to in discussions. The qualitative research methods used enabled me to establish a close link between data which referred to individual action, and data which dealt with social structure. By examining

data in both these areas, it was possible to make some attempt to establish a closer relationship between social structure and individual action.

The qualitative research techniques also helped to sustain a high level of interest amongst nearly all the participants. It was possible to clarify the intentions behind the research, to answer specific and general questions, and to probe into areas that I needed to understand more fully. The open and informal style of enquiry also helped to create a feeling of trust between the participants and myself. Appendix 2 gives some indication of this. They knew that the study involved not only an investigation of their views and actions, but that **my** views and actions were also open to scrutiny by them.

Despite some instances of suspicious students, parents and employers, I received almost total co-operation. The participants did not regard me as a threat. Besides the modes of enquiry which facilitated an easy relationship, the parents seemed willing to contribute to a study which they regarded as **"educational,"** and therefore valuable to their children. The teachers, on the other hand, did not regard me as a threat since they knew I was not there to assess their performance. The employers felt that this was a unique opportunity to assist in a project which would indirectly benefit them by getting **"better quality workers."** The students were interested partly because of their curiosity in this study, and also because they saw me as someone in whom they could confide.

### 8.3 A COMPARISON OF THE TRENDS IN THE TWO SCHOOLS AND THE TWO GRADES

Of the school-leavers, sixteen came from Orchard Lane and nine from Ridgemount. Except for three lower-middle-class students from Orchard Lane, the rest of the school-leavers were from the working-class. These were divided almost equally between the upper and lower sectors.

In both schools a similar number of students left school at the end of standards eight and nine. However, there was a noticeable difference in numbers at the end of standard ten. At this

stage, ten students at Orchard Lane left to seek employment, and of these six were from the ordinary grade. At Ridgemount, only four students left at the end of standard ten, and of these only one was from the ordinary grade. Over the years, Ridgemount had acquired a reputation for achieving "good" matriculation examination results, especially in the exemption category. The majority of the ordinary grade students who passed in this category entered tertiary education, instead of entering the labour market immediately.

As far as achieving social mobility was concerned, the lower-working-class students from both schools seemed to suffer a similar fate. The boys from both grades, but especially those from the practical grade, after experiencing various spells of unemployment entered semi-skilled work. Some lower-working class girls ended up in domesticity. Very few students in this group achieved upward mobility. Those who did included a boy from the ordinary grade at Ridgemount, who got a lower-middle-class job, and two girls from the ordinary grade at Orchard Lane who got lower-middle-class jobs.

When the mobility routes of the upper-working-class school-leavers are considered, one notices slight differences between the two schools. One of the students from Orchard Lane got an apprenticeship, while another became a semi-skilled worker, and a third entered domesticity. In the latter two cases, there was downward mobility. At Ridgemount, there was a measure of upward, as well as downward, mobility. Two of the students from this school got lower-middle-class jobs, while three others obtained semi-skilled jobs. The general picture which emerged in the two schools was that, despite limited amounts of upward and downward mobility, the upper-working-class students maintained their social-class position.

Of the three middle-class school-leavers from Orchard Lane, two were from the practical grade. Both got upper-working-class jobs, and one later obtained a lower-middle-class job. The third student from the ordinary grade got a lower-middle-class job. Generally, like the other two groups, this group of school-leavers also maintained their social-class position.



When the two grades in the two schools were compared, it was clear that the limited amount of social mobility occurred mainly amongst the ordinary grade students, especially those who had completed standard ten. A few working-class students from the ordinary grade managed to get lower-middle-class jobs. However, the practical grade students in both schools, especially those from the lower and upper working classes, entered jobs which were usually held by members of their social class. The girls who were destined for domesticity also came from the practical grade, and mainly from the lower working class.

When each school was considered separately, a comparison of the mobility routes of the practical grade and ordinary grade students revealed patterns similar to those just described. However, when it came to getting "suitable" jobs the practical grade students at Ridgemount, who left school at the end of standard ten were not as fortunate as those in the practical grade at Orchard Lane. All three upper-working-class students in the standard ten practical grade at Ridgemount were downwardly mobile. They got lower-working-class, semi-skilled jobs. Of those at Orchard Lane, at least one from the upper working class got a lower-middle-class job; while a lower-middle-class student got an upper-working-class job. The remaining two entered domesticity. One was from the upper working class; the other from the lower working class. While the practical grade students at Orchard Lane did not fare as well as their fellows in the ordinary grade, they were nevertheless better off than their counterparts from Ridgemount.

#### 8.4 DIFFERENCES IN LIFE-STYLES

When examining the behaviour, perceptions and definitions of the various participants, and the contexts within which all these were embedded, I was able to get some insight into how the different life-styles of the school-leavers were produced and maintained. The analysis revealed some important differences in the life-styles of those from different social backgrounds, and between the two sexes. There were also marked differences in the life-styles of students from the tertiary education group, and the school-leavers from the practical grade.

Much of the analysis was concerned with the patterned differences between the different groups of students, and how these distinc-



tions were produced and maintained. Various categories which classified these differences were identified, and attempts were made to offer some account of how such differentiations were challenged or upheld in routine social interaction.

The discussion in Part One gave some indication of how such differences in life-styles were rooted in experience: in the family, school, work and the wider society. However, the analysis in Part Two could not afford to focus too narrowly on such differences. It also had to take into account some of the common elements in the life-styles of these various social groups. This helped to indicate the overall position of Indians as a minority, and an intermediate status group in a racially-divided society.

## 8.5 SOCIAL CLASS

### 8.5.1 The Lower Working Class

This group which made up almost half of the school-leavers consisted of those who entered unskilled and semi-skilled work (in the case of the boys) and domesticity (in the case of several girls). The majority were also from the practical grade. Several of these school-leavers had to leave school before completing standard ten because of financial difficulties. Some, like their parents, were forced to take over family responsibilities at an early age; and because of domestic problems, pressure from family members, and the sudden availability of jobs early school leaving resulted.

The general trend amongst the boys in particular was that, despite their desire to get into the skilled trades (short-term careers), they were drawn towards careerless jobs. The entry into unskilled and semi-skilled work was generally accompanied by their construction of short-term goals. The social circumstances of their families and neighbourhoods forced them into adopting such goals. They became easily socialised into short-term goals. Their cultural interpretations of their material circumstances promoted the construction of short-term rather than long-term visions. For example, when stating preferences for their children's jobs, the parents often displayed functional, utilitarian views. Their main concern was that their children should get well-paid jobs.

The policies and practices of the schools reinforced the effects of these short-term goals by channelling these students towards short-term, manual occupations. This was evident from the ways in which lower-working-class practical grade students were perceived and labelled by their teachers, as well as by their guidance counsellors. The classification, framing and evaluation of knowledge in the **"watered down"** curriculum in the practical grade were also directed at developing the manual abilities of these students in preparation for their entry into the secondary labour market. Many of these students were able to detect the schools' discriminatory policies and practices against those in the practical grade, and they resented this deeply. However, criticisms and resistance seemed to be caged, and did not assume any kind of aggressive form.

The actions of the students also contributed towards this trend. While many boys, for example, were keen to avoid getting into unskilled, careerless jobs and looked forward to obtaining some kind of skilled trades, they showed a preference for working with their hands rather than doing jobs associated with mental activity. Many also expressed instrumental views about education. Obtaining a standard-ten certificate meant getting **"good"** jobs.

There were some students who did not care about working hard to achieve their goals. For example, there were at least six students from both grades who were known to be unreliable in some respects. They did not attend school regularly, were not always attentive during lessons, and sometimes failed to complete tasks set by their teachers. These students had contributed in some degree to their own lack of success in school, their early school leaving, and their difficulty in obtaining skilled jobs. By contrast, some students from the ordinary grade displayed very positive attitudes and performed very well at school. Though circumstances at home made it difficult for them to proceed to tertiary education, they managed to get into lower-level clerical jobs, and were determined to get eventually into high-status jobs.

Experiences of unemployment for many of these students further reinforced their utilitarian views, and also led to a lowering

of career aspirations. Prolonged unemployment meant that it was increasingly difficult to get into the skilled trades. It soon became clear that it was crucial for them to take whatever was available, instead of waiting for the skilled jobs that were offered to those with experience and better qualifications.

Though they disliked the careerless nature of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs, which many of them eventually got, it was important for them to accommodate themselves to such employment until they could find **"something better."** The experiences of unemployment, sub-employment, and careerless work led to some doubts about the value of educational qualifications. Some of these students felt that in such circumstances it was more useful to have **"contacts"** in order to secure employment. However, despite such scepticism about qualifications they did not abandon their belief in education. Many were still anxious to continue with part-time studies so that they could eventually obtain skilled jobs.

#### 8.5.2 The Upper Working Class

Seven of the ten upper-working-class school-leavers were from the practical grade. There was some upward, as well as downward, mobility in this group. Almost an equal number of students found lower-middle-class and semi-skilled jobs. A few girls from this group also entered domesticity.

Compared with the lower working class, the parents of these school-leavers showed greater flexibility in their planning. Fathers who were in the skilled trades, small business and supervisory positions expressed their wish to **"move ahead"** and improve their life-styles. These parents were also more conscious of the need for educational qualifications, and encouraged their children to study hard and do well at school. They wanted their children to get jobs that not only paid well, but which also afforded some security and opportunities for promotion. Despite these less context-bound aims, they nevertheless displayed many characteristics of short-term planning which are usually associated with short-term careers. The construction of such short-term goals was also influenced by the parents' lack of any deep knowledge of the long-term benefits of education, and a lack of awareness of their children's progress at school.

Like their lower-working-class counterparts in the practical grade, the boys in this group were also seen by their teachers and counsellors as being suited for lower-status, manual jobs. Their practical and physical abilities were over-emphasised at the expense of their mental abilities. The girls, on the other hand, were considered to be suitable for clerical jobs.

Though several of the students from both grades remained in school till the end of standard nine or ten, their instrumental outlook towards school and education helped to facilitate their movement towards the short-term careers with which their teachers associated them. Like their parents, they also felt that being successful at school would ensure getting secure jobs in the trades or lower-clerical levels. They also seemed to accept their teachers' and counsellors' predictions of their career prospects.

However, compared with those from the lower working class, these students seemed to display a greater determination to succeed in school, where they had actually performed well. Those who were in the practical grade expressed strong criticisms against the discriminatory policies and practices of the schools; however, this did not cause them to divert their attention away from school. For example, some saw much value in careers guidance as a preparation for finding suitable jobs.

While there was a general pro-school attitude among these students there were also others who displayed mild forms of resistance. In some cases this worked to the detriment of those who eventually found that the only jobs which they could obtain were semi-skilled. These were students who tended to take life easy. For example, there were at least three school-leavers who did not take their school work very seriously. Their teachers complained that they devoted much time to **"outside activities."** When faced with unemployment, these students also passed their time in the home, neighbourhood, at street corners, and shopping centres **"doing nothing."** This diminished quality of life which resulted, partly because of unemployment and partly because of the students' attitudes was in effect a preparation for entry into careerless work.

Like the lower-working-class students, these school-leavers also had to reconstruct and re-define their career aspirations because of severe unemployment. It was very difficult to get the skilled trades and clerical jobs which they aspired to. Feelings of guilt as a result of not being able to contribute to the family income led many of them to seek semi-skilled careerless jobs in the interim. Unemployment also meant frequent changes between several short-term, dead-end jobs when these were available. Like the lower-working-class students, those who were able to obtain semi-skilled jobs also disliked the routine nature of careerless work, and were even more resentful of the fact that they were **"overworked and underpaid."** However, since it was not easy to find alternative jobs they also felt that it was better to put up with these jobs in the time being. This meant surviving under conditions of boredom and monotony.

By contrast, the one school-leaver who obtained an apprenticeship reacted differently. Despite the fact that he also had to put up with the routine and boring nature of work at certain times, he seemed to value the permanency, security, and scope for advancement offered in this job. He saw this as a preparation for entry into even more highly-skilled jobs at a later stage. The two girls who obtained lower-middle-class, clerical jobs valued these jobs for similar reasons. They seemed to derive much enjoyment from their work, despite some of the dull moments.

Those who were compelled to seek employment in semi-skilled jobs were disappointed at having to lower their aspirations, and, like the lower-working-class students, they also expressed doubts about the value of qualifications and the relevance of education when it became difficult to get jobs of their choice. Despite their pessimism, they were even more determined than the lower working class to improve their qualifications, and enrolled for courses in technical education so that they could eventually get into the skilled trades.

### 8.5.3 The Lower Middle Class

Two of the three middle-class school-leavers became apprentices. One of these later got a job as a clerk. The third was unemployed for some time, before being employed as a temporary school-teacher.



The parents of these school-leavers were more highly educated than the working-class parents, and placed a high value on education as a means of gaining social mobility. For example, all the fathers were involved in part-time studies so as to get promotion at work. Their educational and career aspirations for their children were based on long-term goals. The fathers, in particular, expressed disappointment at the fact that they themselves had to leave school early on account of financial difficulties, and had been forced to take on certain family responsibilities. As a result they were unable to get into professional jobs. They were determined not to let their children suffer the same fate. They were proud of the fact that despite these hardships they managed to acquire some measure of social and occupational mobility through struggle and determination. They also wanted their children to improve their life-styles, but this would have to be done by first obtaining good educational qualifications.

Compared with many of the working-class school-leavers, these three students did well at school. Prakash and Nesan were among the top students in the practical grade at Orchard Lane, while Suraya from the ordinary grade was considered by her teachers to be **"well above average."** However, Prakash left school at the end of standard eight to take up an apprenticeship; the other two remained till the end of standard ten. Prakash wanted to **"get into a trade."** As was the case with the upper-working-class school-leaver who became an apprentice he also did not mind the manual nature of work, and saw prospects for promotion.

The other two students wanted higher-status, non-manual jobs. Soon after obtaining a job as an apprentice cabinet-maker, Nesan did not like the conditions at work. It was not long before he left and got another job, this time as a data processing clerk. However, after a month he was retrenched. Suraya got a casual job as a sales assistant, but did not like it because it was a boring, routine, occupation and felt strongly that such a job was unsuited to her standard of education.

Nesan and Suraya hoped that improved educational qualifications would enable them to get into some kind of profession, while Prakash felt that by obtaining higher grade technical certificates he would eventually become an instructor in motor mechanics at a trade school.



#### 8.5.3.1 The Middle-Class, Tertiary Education Group

The middle-class character of this group contrasted sharply with the working-class character of the school-leaving group. The parents of the tertiary education group were better educated than most parents of the working-class school-leavers; and were able to take advantage of the opportunities which the educational system provided for the children. Many of these parents were strong believers in educational qualifications and encouraged their children to proceed to institutions of tertiary education. They were aware of the long-term benefits of this. Like the parents of the lower-middle-class school-leavers, some of these parents also had to leave school early because of financial difficulties. Nevertheless, they were also determined to provide a brighter future for their children. Some parents in this group struggled to upgrade themselves by studying part-time for degrees, diplomas and certificates.

Their experiences at school reinforced their belief in educational qualifications and the long-term benefits of tertiary education. Compared with the working-class school-leavers who were channelled towards manual occupations, the teachers and principals saw these students as potential university and college material. The classification, framing and evaluation of knowledge in the ordinary grade ensured that they were given the opportunity to study complex, theoretical and abstract subject matter. This in turn prepared them for tertiary education, and ultimately for high-status, professional jobs.

Encouraged by the support of their parents and their teachers, these students valued academic work highly. Except for two students, the rest of this group performed very well in school.

#### 8.6 GENDER

There were eleven girls in the school-leaving group, and some of these obtained lower-clerical and secretarial jobs, while a few got married soon after leaving school. The latter included both lower-and upper-working-class girls. Of the four who left before reaching standard ten, three became housewives.

The culture of most of the families of the school-leavers seemed to prepare girls for roles that were clearly subordinate to those of boys. This was especially noticeable in the lower

and upper working classes where girls were required to undertake many domestic duties after school hours, and during vacations. Girls were also expected not to deviate too far from their traditional roles, especially when it came to their relationship with boys.

Despite these views, most parents were prepared to give their sons and daughters the same opportunities to further their education. However, when it came to judging their children's careers, they seemed to use a different set of criteria for each sex. For example, while many working-class parents wanted their daughters to obtain at least matriculation, they did not expect them to become career girls. Even if they succeeded in getting employment they expected that after marriage their daughters would work mainly to supplement their husbands' incomes. At a later stage, it would be necessary for them to give up their jobs to look after their children. For most of these parents, a girl's career was of secondary importance. They were concerned that their daughters should choose jobs which would enable them to combine their career pursuits with their domestic responsibilities.

By contrast, the middle-class girls in the tertiary education group were not so confined to domestic duties as the working-class school-leavers. While they were given more freedom to engage in activities outside the home, their parents did not want them to be too liberated when it came to associating with boys. Nevertheless, unlike the working-class parents of the school-leavers, these parents encouraged their daughters to become career women. They wanted them to become doctors, pharmacists, engineers, social workers and teachers. However, even these parents hoped that such jobs would allow their daughters at least some time to devote to domestic duties.

In addition to the influence of the family on the structuring of gender divisions, the schools also exerted similar influences. This was evident in the classification and framing of knowledge according to the gender code. The attention of boys and girls was directed towards gender specific subjects. When advising them about the choice of careers, the counsellors like the parents were also concerned that girls should consider jobs that would suit their **"feminine nature."** Girls in the practical

grade were advised to apply for lower-level clerical and secretarial jobs, while those in the ordinary grade were advised to set their sights on high-status, professional, female-orientated jobs.

The preferences of the girls revealed their acceptance of the gender code. While many were not attracted to semi-skilled factory work, they aspired to jobs such as nursing, teaching, social work, banking and computer programming. Like their parents and their teachers, most girls expressed the wish that these jobs should not interfere too greatly with their domestic roles as wives and mothers. They wanted jobs which would be "suitable for women."

The conditions of unemployment also facilitated the preparation of some of these girls for lower-status female jobs, and for a future in domesticity. Those in the practical grade who did not have the appropriate qualifications for lower-middle-class office jobs were prepared to lower their aspirations, and applied for jobs like receptionist, switchboard operator and metermaid. Those who found it difficult to get jobs were confined to the routine of female duties at home. At least four of these girls who were drawn towards housework came to see their future primarily in terms of marriage. Some were very concerned about whether their future husbands would allow them to seek employment.

Employers' perceptions of female workers also contributed to upholding gender stereotypes. They were not keen to promote girls in lower-clerical jobs to higher positions, since they felt that women were not "career minded." In addition, the girls themselves were prepared to put up with this situation. Though they were critical of such policies, and disliked the routine and fragmented nature of some aspects of these clerical and secretarial jobs, they wanted to gain experience so that they could negotiate for "better jobs" at a later stage.

#### 8.7 RACE

The experience of having had racially-separate schooling, living in Indian Group Areas, and seeking employment in a racially-segmented labour market, helped to reproduce the racial code of an apartheid society.

The form and content of schooling had important implications for the students' position in a racially-divided society. The overt and the hidden curriculum directed the students' attention towards neutral, non-controversial, and non-political topics and discussions. In essence, school experience was heavily geared towards arguments in favour of the **status quo**.

Racial separation in school was related in some ways to racial divisions at work. The jobs which the school-leavers had in mind, and in which they found themselves were those customarily reserved for members of the Indian group. This was true of jobs in the semi-skilled, skilled and lower-level clerical and secretarial categories. The school-leavers seemed to take for granted that these were the main types of jobs which were within their reach. Despite the fact that in recent years there have been some opportunities for Indians to occupy certain higher-status jobs which were previously reserved for Whites, many school-leavers still focussed their attention on **"Indian jobs."** They were also very conscious of the fact that they were members of a disadvantaged, minority race group in a White-dominated society. Their perceptions and experiences of race discrimination in the labour market, and other factors such as the very high unemployment rate amongst Indians, led them to apply for such jobs. This helped to consolidate the existing racial divisions in the labour market.

The history of the Indian community in South Africa, particularly those of indentured origin, indicates the struggles and efforts made by this group to contribute to their upliftment in an apartheid society. To this end, they invested heavily in education. This belief in education was noticeable amongst all social classes considered in this study. Though there were times when the school-leavers expressed doubts about the relevance of qualifications, they did not give up hope of continuing with their studies. The Indian community still places a heavy emphasis on success in education as an important means of gaining mobility in a society which discriminates against them on the basis of race.

#### 8.8 TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION OF THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

Although there were limited amounts of upward and downward

mobility which were evident in this study, for the majority of school-leavers the transition from school to work meant retaining their social status. The differences in the lifestyles between the various subgroups, and the racial status of the group as a whole were produced and reproduced by three important factors:

- (a) the practices of the school-leavers themselves;
- (b) the practices of their parents, teachers, counsellors and employers; and
- (c) the structure of the family, school and work settings within which all these practices were located.

Though these three aspects of the production and reproduction processes were treated as separate entities, in the analysis of the students' educational and career pathways, each was related to the other two.

The constructions of these pathways rested on choices and decisions which were influenced to a great extent by the structures in which the students found themselves. These structures which included the family, the school, labour market, and the western, capitalist, apartheid society constrained, as well as enabled the students' choices. It was within these settings that the school-leavers had come to negotiate choices and alternatives. The structures outlined the pre-conditions for many of their decisions.

The class differences between families, and certain cultural traits peculiar to the Indian family exerted important influences. For example, family size, educational levels, financial and material circumstances, and the roles of males and females were some aspects that accounted for the construction of short-term and long-term goals. When compared with the lower-working-class families, the higher educational levels, better material and financial circumstances, and less distinct roles between males and females in the upper-working-class and lower-middle-class families allowed for greater flexibility in the construction of short-term and long-term goals. The short-term visions of both lower-working-class and upper-working-class families were reflected in the utilitarian outlook of both parents and children towards education and jobs. In many working-class homes, it was this kind of reality which was clearly associated with the student's aspirations for short-term careers in the skilled trades.



The policies and practices concerning the division of students into classes and grades helped to channel different groups of school-leavers towards "mental" and "manual", as well as male and female occupations. It was also the hidden values which socialised the group as a whole for living in a racially-divided society.

The class, race and gender segmentations of the labour market, and high unemployment amongst Indians were important structural conditions which led many of the school-leavers to lower their career aspirations. This was especially so with the lower-and upper-working-class students.

The different subgroups of school-leavers responded in different ways in terms of their experiences, and their positions within the social system. This included their interpretations and responses to structural and material conditions of their lives. These life-styles were the result of the creations of the members of the different subgroups. The decisions and choices of the school-leavers from the different social classes, and from the two grades were produced within cultural relationships, and were not just influenced by the macro structures. They were the result of the production of meanings by the students, as well as the influences of the dominant ideologies of the school, the labour market and the wider society. In this way, the actors in this study became connected to and formed part of the structures.

Some distinctive features of the cultural patterns of these school-leavers included: (a) short-term goals of the lower-and upper-working-class school-leavers; (b) the beliefs and practices concerning the subordination of women, and domesticity; and (c) the non-aggressive, and comparatively silent forms of resistance and accommodation. By producing and reproducing such patterns, they helped to uphold the structures of society.

The perceptions of the parents and the students in both sectors of the working-class suggested that the reward motive was particularly strong. Their short-term functional, utilitarian views of education and jobs probably stemmed from the social and economic hardships faced by many. Hence, they saw education



as one of the avenues through which mobility could be achieved. In several cases, mobility meant obtaining educational certificates and relevant skills to improve their chances of obtaining short-term careers. They believed that once in these jobs, material benefits would accrue. Because of their struggles in life, they had come to judge success and failure according to material rewards.

Though several of these working-class parents were concerned about their children's future, they were unaware of their children's progress at school, and lacked insight into how to make the best use of what the school had to offer. This was most evident in the case of the lower-working-class parents, and this aspect of their culture tended to reinforce the construction of short-term aims. Though many parents were pro-school and pro-education, the long-term benefits for their children's education often escaped them because of their general ignorance about what was important in schooling for acquiring job skills. Though this was not what they intended, their lack of knowledge and power partly influenced their children's movement towards careerless and short-term careers jobs. By contrast, the lower-middle-class parents, especially of the tertiary education group seemed more knowledgeable, with more power, and had long-term goals. They showed a greater awareness of how to achieve mobility through schooling.

Many of these families also socialised their children into gender stereotyped roles. At school, too, the actions of teachers, counsellors and the girls themselves tended to reinforce the subordinate role of females. For example, the girls chose subjects and aspired to jobs which they regarded as **"suitable for women."**

Though several school-leavers from all social classes expressed grievances about their schools, their jobs, and racial and gender inequalities, they were, nevertheless ambitious to improve their chances in life. Though there were mild forms of protest and resistance, overall it was evident that the students were prepared to accommodate and adjust to prevailing circumstances. Any resentments that they might have had were caged, and they were prepared to **"move ahead"** by striving within the present structures.

Despite their scepticism about the value of educational qualifications, and the relevance of schooling for careerless work, the fact that many of them felt that they were locked into jobs that they disliked did not cause them to lose faith in education. On the contrary, they were keen to improve their educational qualifications so that they would eventually obtain skilled jobs. The cultural forms through which they expressed themselves were non-aggressive. The meanings which parents and children attached to education, educational qualifications and life-chances were influenced by their culture and their position in the total context of the South African society.

This study has shown how significant people like teachers and employers, who although external to the school-leavers' identities, were heavily involved in the production of their career identities. Particular attention has been drawn to the role of school counsellors, teachers, and employers in the selection and recruitment procedures. These people allocated identities to young job-seekers, and legitimated these through their practices. The class and gender divisions amongst the school-leavers were partially produced and reproduced through the way in which they were labelled by strategically placed individuals in the school and the labour market. This in turn was linked to the distribution of power within the two schools, and the particular workplaces in which the school-leavers were found.

In the schools, for example, the labelling process channelled the majority of the lower-working-class and upper-working-class boys towards manual occupations. The employers, too, judged these young workers according to dominant middle-class values. The schools and the places of work seemed implicitly to favour those with access to power and resources, by distributing different skills, values, and dispositions to different social groups. In this way they contributed to the re-creation of race, class and gender divisions of society.

This reproduction process was not straightforward. The transition into work was characterised by conflicts, struggle, and the determination to succeed. The choices made in some directions brought about unintended effects in other directions. There

were several instances where these young people's actions and views of the world contradicted what actually happened to them. For example, the fact that some lower - and upper-working-class school-leavers ended up in careerless jobs was not the result of their own free choice. By contrast, the decisions of those who took up apprenticeships, and the few upper-working-class girls who got clerical jobs seemed to suggest the notion of individual choice. Since there were hardly any vacancies in the skilled trades, several working-class school-leavers were virtually forced to turn their attention to semi-skilled, careerless jobs which were easier to get.

Though these working-class school-leavers disliked the routine nature of these jobs, they decided to go on working till they could find something better. For many, the advice offered by their teachers and counsellors contradicted their experience of work. Careerless work did not offer the opportunity for self-realisation and mobility. These tensions were seen in their attempts to accommodate themselves to the boring nature of the work, and to change from one careerless job to another whenever this was possible.

Other contradictions, doubts and reversals were seen in the attitudes of some students towards school, notably the lower-working-class boys from the practical grade. Though they were severely critical of the school's discriminatory policies towards them, they still seemed to place their faith in education in order to get "good" jobs. However, when unemployment made things difficult these lower-working-class boys seemed to suspend their belief in qualifications, seeing more value in the use of "contacts." But, once they realised that they were being locked into careerless jobs, their faith in education seemed to re-emerge. Improving one's educational qualifications was seen as the solution to unemployment and sub-employment.

The processes of production and reproduction were maintained by the actions of the students. Their choices, decisions and actions could be located largely within the context of the class, race and gender divisions of society. The relationship between race, class and gender on the one hand, and "outside"

categories such as economics, politics, and knowledge on the other hand, were reflected in the students' perceptions of the range and complexity of their social and material world. They were responding all the time to the circumstances in which they found themselves. They had to choose within the context of structures which placed constraints upon them. These choices rested on the students' perceptions and cultural interpretations of the situations in which they had been placed.

Though the transitional process was characterised by tension, struggle, conflicts, and mild forms of resistance, the actions of the school-leavers encouraged an accommodation to the existing system. In essence, they consented to the prevailing sets of power-relationships, thereby accepting the **status quo**. This consent to participation in a divided society was the result of their actions and experiences in school, at work, and in the family.

The **status quo** was maintained through the reproduction of race, class and gender divisions. The students' actions within these divisions were creating and promoting hegemony. The fact that these people accepted the **status quo**, and the existing power relationships, indicates that a powerful hegemony was at work helping the processes of production and reproduction of class, gender and racial divisions to operate smoothly. The structures conditioned the interactions and outlooks of the school-leavers, and these in turn led to changes or modifications of the structures. The beliefs, values and actions of the school-leavers were partly influenced by the social system.

However, the fact that these school-leavers did not openly articulate their discontent does not mean that challenge and protest were absent. Because of the non-aggressive element within Indian culture, resistance assumes a form different from that in most other communities. This may be partly due to the fact that members of this minority dominated group tend to see education as vital to their future.

#### 8.9 THE PLACE OF THIS STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF OTHER RELATED STUDIES

While this study is located within a similar framework of other recent studies on youth culture and the relationship between

the family, school and the labour market, it nevertheless focussed on some different issues. Unlike the studies of Willis (1977), Corrigan (1979), McRobbie (1978) and Jenkins (1983) who were concerned mainly with social class, the present study examines class, gender and race. When seen against the theoretical and conceptual frameworks presented in Part One, as well as those of the studies just mentioned, this study may be said to belong loosely to a school of analysis concerned with the cultural production and reproduction of social divisions in society.

Even a superficial comparison with other studies on the transition from school to work demonstrates that the present study was also concerned with similar constraining features. These included the labelling process, the classification and framing of knowledge, the social criteria used for recruitment into jobs, escalating unemployment, and the role of the school in the channelling of students towards specific occupational identities.

Like some of the studies reviewed in Part One, especially those of Willis (1977), McRobbie (1978), Ashton and Field (1976), Roberts (1975) and Jenkins (1983), this study has shown that the transition from school to work is closely tied up with the beliefs and practices of social actors, and the historical conditions in which these have taken root. It emphasises the autonomy of the students, but at the same time it relates this to the constraints imposed by the structures. While there were individual differences in the choices made by students, there were also several instances when such choices and decisions were affected by the structures of society. This included the structures of: the family, school, the labour market, patriarchy, capitalism, and apartheid.

The students made choices from feasible alternatives, and were able to explain the reasons for their choices. To the extent that it stresses the autonomous nature of the students, this study presents arguments similar to those put forward by the reproduction theories of Apple (1982a), Giroux (1981), and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies of the University of Birmingham. Research studies emanating from these sources developed a voluntaristic form of analysis. In the present study, the students were not just victims at the mercy of the



macro structures. Even within the severe constraints of unemployment, racially-separate education, and life in an apartheid society, their decisions and actions were the basis on which their identities were constructed.

This aspect of the study is presented somewhat differently from the way in which Young (1971a), for example, dealt with the assumptions underlying the organisation and transmission of knowledge; and Bourdieu's (1973) analysis of how schools legitimate the dominant culture. Though both authors give us in-depth accounts of the culture of the dominant middle-class group, they leave us with an unexplored account of the non-dominant working-class group. By paying attention to particular features of the culture of the dominated groups, the present study has been able to show how different forms of acceptance, rejection, contradictions and accommodation resulted in the reproduction of society. Ruling class hegemony was maintained through the cultural expression of the working class, rather than through direct imposition of the dominant ideology.

The actors' awareness of the conditions of social reproduction was reflected in their references to the class structure, gender and race. To this extent, the present study demonstrates the close relationship which exists between the actions and decisions of the students and the structures of society. The students' actions were located within social and economic structures, which not only influenced their actions but were in turn affected by their actions. To this extent, this study resembled closely the views expressed by Willis (1977), Jenkins (1983) and Giddens (1976; 1979b; 1984) on how structures are constituted through action. Giddens's structuration theory is an attempt to explain the effects of the actions of individuals upon structure; as well as the influences of structure upon individuals, and how these are embedded in each other. Willis, too, has succeeded in demonstrating some of the points where structure and agency overlap. Despite criticisms such as those of Walker (1986:64-9), Willis's contribution has been widely acknowledged. Gordon (1984:112-14) provides a valuable critique of his theory.

In the present study, social action is shown to exist in the actions of people who produce and reproduce it through their



everyday transactions. For example, the students, especially those from the working class, were not just dominated or suffused in false consciousness. They were able to reflect on the realities which confronted them and then decide on the options which were available.

While the present study used analytic tools and research methodology similar to those of other studies using cultural perspectives, it revealed forms of culture and resistance which were different. For example, the entry into careerless jobs and short-term careers for the majority of the working-class school-leavers, was not a celebration of freedom, as was the case with Willis's boys. For Indian school-leavers, it was an unwilling entry into work. It was not seen as an escape from the conformist pressures of society, but more as a compulsion to secure work in the face of severe unemployment.

Another striking difference between this study and those done on White, lower-working-class boys in Britain is the relative absence of counter-school culture. Except for a few students in the practical grade at Ridgemount, there was little evidence of counter-school culture. Struggle and resistance were not expressed through open confrontation and physically aggressive forms of behaviour. The struggle to "move ahead" depended on developing strategies for achieving success within existing structures.

Many of the students from both grades came from homes where they learnt to value hard work, the importance of getting on in life, good manners, and respect for others. However, while several school-leavers in both grades worked hard in school, they also "enjoyed life" and had "fun." There were instances of "playing the fool," "having a laugh," "passing the time," "doing nothing" and "messaging about." They were not disruptive, aggressive, delinquent or violent. This contrasts greatly with the patterns assumed by Willis's lads whose opposition to authority expressed itself in truancy, smoking, drinking, non-conformist style of dress, vandalism, violence and theft. They also disliked education and had no intention of striving for qualifications. They were only interested in the "here and now."

Finally, it needs to be stressed that there are many points of agreement between the present study and those on the transition



from school to work in Britain; in particular, the intrinsic lack of meaning which careerless work holds for the working-class. However, a major difference between this and the British studies is the inclusion of class, gender and race as aspects which operate alongside each other. The analysis points to the importance of race, class and gender in the construction of educational and career pathways. McRobbie (1978) has criticised studies such as those of Willis and Corrigan for their omission of girls and black youth. She has pointed out that these studies have ignored the influence of patriarchal relations alongside that of capitalism on the formation of counter-school culture.

#### 8.10 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The suggestions which are offered for pursuing further research in fields related to this study are categorised in three sections. Firstly, the need has been stressed for complementing micro studies with large-scale survey-type studies, and the need for published material in the sociology of education in South Africa. Secondly, there are suggestions for the further exploration of specific issues which emerged from the analysis of the data concerning the transitional process. Lastly, some suggestions are offered for strengthening the relationship between interpretive and structural explanations explored - to develop theoretical perspectives which future studies could use to avoid a superficial analysis of the transitional process.

##### 8.10.1 The Need for Large-Scale Survey-Type Research Studies, and Published Material in the Sociology of Education in South Africa

One of the problems encountered in the preparation of Part One was the general lack of published, large-scale survey-type studies concerning South Africa on matters such as trends in social mobility, family types, the transition from school to work, the relation between unemployment and education, and so on. Studies revealing national trends hardly exist. Micro studies such as the present one need to be grounded in large-scale, fact-finding, survey-type studies. At present, there are studies of regional and local nature on matters such as occupational patterns, race discrimination, and rates of unemployment. These are insufficient for explaining broad trends in South Africa.

To make up for this deficiency, it is suggested that studies on a national scale be undertaken by research organisations such as the **Human Sciences Research Council**, university research institutes, and by independent researchers.

A closely related problem was the lack of clearly formulated ideas on a sociology of education in South Africa, relating specifically to issues such as race, class, gender, culture, life in classrooms, the relationship between school and work, and so on. These are some areas which have been closely scrutinised in the present study. The absence of published empirical research, as well as discussions on theoretical perspectives related to the South African society, made it almost impossible to examine the data of the present study against a background of a South African sociology of education.

There is a very real need for published material in the sociology of education in South Africa. Efforts made by people such as Penny (1983), Graaf (1987), Molteno (1987), Morrow (1984), Muir (1983), Nel (1987a; 1987b), Kallaway (1987a; 1987b) and Buckland (1984) could be regarded as a beginning in this direction.

#### 8.10.2 Specific Issues Concerning the Transition From School to Work which Require Further Analysis

##### 8.10.2.1 Occupational Choice

The evidence in this study tends to support strongly Roberts's (1975) theory that occupational choice is determined largely by the opportunities in society rather than by the free choice of individuals. In the light of this, there is a need for a closer scrutiny of the policies and practices on which careers counselling in Indian schools is based. The two schools in this study tended to over-emphasise the importance of the individual's interests, abilities, development and motivation when advising students about choosing careers. The relevance and assumptions underlying the adequacy of career-counselling programmes should be analysed critically, by examining progressive liberal beliefs about individualism, as well as the psychological theories of development.

8.10.2.2 Race

Though it was clear that racial divisions in education, the labour market and the wider society affected the destinies of many school-leavers, it was surprising to find that when discussing their experiences comparatively few references were made to race discrimination. Did the school-leavers deliberately avoid discussions that were considered to be "sensitive"? Or, did they construct their perceptions around areas of more immediate concern because "moving ahead" depended on accommodating to, rather than challenging existing structures? This aspect was not sufficiently explored since it fell outside the scope of the study. Studies on race and education such as those undertaken by Mullard (1983; 1985), Troyna and Williams (1985) and Carrington (1983) in England need to be undertaken in South Africa if we are to know more about the cultural forms through which the racial structures are produced and reproduced.

8.10.2.3 Gender

The male-dominated features of Indian culture, and the patriarchal relations in the wider South African society were other aspects of the findings which could not be explored to any great depth for reasons similar to those advanced above. However, the career identities of girls and their domestic situation were closely examined. The increasing tensions and the emerging patterns of accommodation, resistance and change amongst working-class female school-leavers are some themes which warrant further study. This should caution us against using the experiences of males as the basis for a gender-neutral approach to education. At present, studies on gender in education in South Africa are severely limited. Such studies could be undertaken within particular social groups, as well as across groups.

8.10.2.4 Unemployment

This study has shown that for nearly every school-leaver the transition into work was inevitably preceded by the transition into unemployment. For many, the experience of unemployment presented new challenges. This was especially seen in their reflections over the relevance of educational qualifications.



In a wider sense, unemployment influenced the construction of different forms of resistance, and accommodation by the different subgroups. This is one area of the transitional process that has received close attention by several British, Australian, European and American researchers. Though increasing attention has been given to broad studies on unemployment in South Africa in recent years, there has been very little research on unemployment and education.

#### 8.10.2.5 Micro Studies

This is the first micro study of this kind undertaken in Indian schools, and other similar studies if undertaken could increase our understanding of the perceptions of our students. Most studies conducted in Indian schools have focussed on macro issues, policy matters, and other related aspects which take as their point of departure the viewpoints of the dominant groups. As a result, change and development is usually explained from the point of view of the decision makers, with little or no reference to the realities of the groups for whom these are intended. Micro studies such as the present one can help to correct this situation by directing our attention to the realities of dominated actors, namely the children, their parents and the members of the communities from which they come.

Future studies in this direction should be able to tell us more about the knowledge, motivation and power of these groups. Micro studies can also be useful for exploring certain processes in schooling, and more specifically life in classrooms. Though studies such as those of Delamont (1976), Woods (1983; 1986), Furlong (1976), Hammersley and Woods (1976; 1984), Fuller (1983), Carrington (1983), McLaren (1986) and others have set the basis for a continuing trend in this direction in Britain and elsewhere, this area of research is virtually untapped in South African schools.

Some issues explored in the present study such as the classification and framing of knowledge in the curriculum, grouping, teaching methods, and time-tabling arrangements, are in need of further investigation, especially via perspectives such as those advanced by Bernstein, Bourdieu, Apple, Giroux and Gramsci. These perspectives have hardly been explored empirically in the South African context. Though their views have been

referred to in academic publications, and in papers delivered at conferences, generally such discussions are over-theorised and under-investigated in empirical terms. Life in schools and classrooms is one area of future educational research that should be given serious consideration.

To provide a basis of comparison with the present study, similar micro studies should be undertaken in some other settings. This study was conducted in two fairly well-established Indian areas in which there was not much evidence of counter-culture. If other studies are undertaken in some schools in recently established townships in suburban areas, we may have the opportunity to find out more about changing patterns of conflict, resistance and accommodation. In recent years, teachers, social workers and community leaders have drawn attention to the increase in anti-establishment patterns of behaviour amongst children living in areas of high density, poverty and alienation.

The present study was conducted when the schools differentiated their students on the basis of ordinary and practical grades. Future micro studies should give us some indication of whether the recent modifications of these two grades into subjects offered at the higher, standard, and lower levels have made any significant differences to the educational and career pathways of school-leavers.

#### 8.10.2.6 A Relational Analysis

However, micro studies of the kind described above should be related to the wider context in which they are situated. Generally, educational research in South Africa shows little evidence of a broad, socio-political-economic analysis. Socially relevant topics such as home-school relations, careers guidance, differentiated education, the curriculum, administration and organisation of education are often researched in an isolated, ahistorical, neutral, objective and value-free way. Since these are matters heavily charged with questions of power and social control, a relational analysis of the kind used in the present study would be useful to reveal certain complexities, and provide for a deeper understanding of education and other social institutions as hegemonic forms.



The study of the students' educational and career routes in the present study, for example, has demonstrated how class relations are passed on in the context of other related and different inequalities such as gender and ethnicity, and how these different categories reflect outward relations marked by power, and which are subjected to varying forms of control. A structural, interpretive analysis of aspects such as the family, the educational system, economic structure, and the political system allows for an examination of ideological values, class relations, racial, gender, political and economic influences within specific historical and socio-economic contexts.

#### 8.10.3 Bridging the Gap Between Structural and Interpretive Analysis

Some of the issues discussed in this study, particularly those relating to the relationship between personal identity and the social structure, the micro and macro aspects of society, and the production and reproduction of culture, continue to be debated in the sociology of education. The integrated theoretical framework of the present study has helped towards exploring some of the complexities presented by these concepts when analysing the transitional process. However, future studies in this and other areas of schooling should continue to be undertaken so as to develop more refined theoretical approaches which will help to avoid over-simplified explanations.

We are in need of theories which should aim at bridging the gap between interpretive and structural explanations. Sticking rigidly to particular schools of thought can produce narrow outlooks. For example, those who have preferred to rely exclusively on interpretive theories such as symbolic interactionism have failed to locate the sources of actors' meanings in the wider society; while those Marxist theorists who relied heavily on political and economic arguments have failed to describe adequately the processes through which individual identities are created in and out of schools (Arnot, 1981). This crisis in educational theory is summarised by Arnot and Whitty's (1982:93) description of the 1970s as a period of **"many new departures but precious few arrivals ..."**

Future researches on the transitional and other processes

in education should attempt to offer deeper insights into how the internal organisation of school and work settings mediate the impact of external forces. Some attempts are made in the present study to explore both structuralist and interpretive perspectives, and to establish a closer relationship between these. Some of the interpretations and accounts which were generated show how the production and reproduction of the students' identities, and categories such as race, class and gender exist side by side. The present study also gives some indication of how external categories such as the economy and the stratification of society are related to the internal processes of change in the family, school and work. More studies of this kind can help to refine our understanding of how structure conditions interaction, and how this in turn leads to a change in, or a modification of, the structure. By bringing the wider society into contact with the actors' definitions of the situation, there is greater scope for sociological theory to bridge the gap between structure and agency.

APPENDIX 1CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

In this study a four-fold classification of occupations was used to indicate the social-class background of the students' families, and also the classes with which the school-leavers' jobs were associated. This classification approximated a scale of status, with the lower-working-class, unskilled and semi-skilled jobs occupying the lowest rung of the ladder. Immediately above this was the skilled-manual, upper working class; and above that the lower middle class. The highest category was the upper middle class.

The lower middle class included small business owners, white- and blue-collar workers, and persons in supervisory positions. While the lower-working-class jobs occupied a distinct position at the bottom of the scale, the relationship between the upper-working-class and lower-middle-class jobs was not very clear. There were only two persons in the upper-middle-class category, and both were professionals who had university degrees.

The most important criterion that was used to determine the social-class status of the students was the father's occupation. This method was also used in most studies on social class and education in Britain, which revealed that father's occupation was the most reliable single criterion for determining social status. Some such studies were those of Cullen (1969:48), Ford (1969:35) and Miller (1971:74).

However, in those cases where father's occupation did not provide a reliable measure, other criteria had to be taken into account. This included mother's occupation, and the economic status of the family. This additional information was required in some cases where fathers were unemployed or deceased. Some students whose class backgrounds had to be determined in this way were Lennie and Moonsamy from the practical grade at Orchard Lane; Raksha and Sheila from the practical grade at Ridgemount; and Selvi (tertiary education group) from the ordinary grade at Ridgemount. In the case of unemployed fathers, their previous occupations were also taken into account.

The scheme which was used to grade occupations according to social prestige was one that was designed by the **Centre for Applied Social Sciences**, of the University of Natal. The roots of this can be traced to the **Registrar General's Classification** in England, and the **Hall-Jones Scale** (Hall and Jones, 1950:31-2). The latter consists of seven social classes, arranged according to status ranging from unskilled-manual to professional and high administrative.

The Hall-Jones Scale was tested in England to ensure that it was in line with the opinions of the man in the street, as well as those of academics (Moser and Hall, 1954:29-50). Other recent modifications of the Registrar General's, and the Hall-Jones Scale are those of Goldthorpe and Hope (1974), and Coxon and Jones (1979).

The procedure used by the **Centre for Applied Social Sciences** of the University of Natal in the ranking of occupations according to prestige is discussed by Stopforth and Schlemmer (1978:14-69). The scale was modified to include the following coding categories:

1. Independent and high professional and equivalent status.
2. Executive and high administrative in large organisations.
3. Professional, salaried professional and equivalent.
4. Lower executive and similar administrative in large firms and civil service, executives in medium firms, and equivalent.
5. Semi-professional and equivalent.
6. Owners and executives of small, private firms, senior clerical, white-collar technical and supervisory, and equivalent.
7. Clerical, sales, representatives and equivalent.
8. Blue-collar technical, supervisory and inspectional, and equivalent.
9. Skilled-manual and semi-skilled foremen and equivalent.
10. Routine non-manual and ranks in services and equivalent.
11. Semi-skilled and equivalent.

Though this scale was designed for use with White South Africans, it was found to be suitable for use with Indians, especially in the light of Maasdorp and Pillay's (1976:238-54) discussion of occupations in this community.

Using the four-fold classification of occupations mentioned earlier, the coding categories in the scale designed by the Centre for Applied Social Sciences of the University of Natal, were grouped in the following way:

Upper Middle Class	: categories 1 to 4
Lower Middle Class	: categories 5 to 8
Skilled-manual Upper Working Class	: category 9
Unskilled and semi-skilled lower working class	: categories 10 and 11

The occupations of parents and school-leavers were classified according to this scale to determine their classes of origins and destinations. The occupations which fell into the different social-class groupings are shown below.

#### Upper Middle Class

degreed primary school head of department  
degreed primary school teacher

#### Lower Middle Class

owner of small business  
municipal building inspector  
factory supervisor  
commercial traveller  
process technician  
production line supervisor  
sales clerk  
secretary  
stock controller  
shipping clerk  
typist  
coding clerk  
temporary school-teacher  
filing clerk  
data processing clerk  
motor car salesman

Upper Working Class

electrician  
apprentice motor mechanic  
cabinet-maker  
apprentice cabinet-maker  
fruit and vegetable hawker  
small cartage contractor  
factory foreman  
maintenance supervisor  
supervisor of labourers on sugar estate  
printer  
stallholder  
lathe machinist  
apprentice shopfitter

Lower Working Class

delivery van driver  
handyman  
labourer  
waiter  
lorry driver  
factory machinist  
packer and despatcher  
cleaner and errand boy  
counterhand - shop assistant  
pedestal assembler  
shank controller  
switchboard operator



HOW THE PARTICIPANTS VIEWED THIS STUDY

The inclusion of details concerning problems encountered with the collection of data in various chapters of Part Two helps to incorporate the principle of reflexivity in the analysis. In addition, this appendix is a further attempt at reflexivity, by including some examples of the thoughts, feelings and reactions of those who participated in this study. It is hoped that this will shed more light on the methodology adopted; and also on the effects which the participants themselves had on the collection of data, and my interpretations and analysis of the information which they provided for me.

Many insights grew out of what I heard, did and felt while I was in the field. This meant that I had to take careful note of what the participants said and felt about this study. In some instances, I made deliberate attempts to obtain the comments of the participants on certain crucial aspects of the study. This became crucial, especially whenever things began to flow too smoothly, as a result of which I began to take things for granted. By encouraging the students, parents, teachers and employers to express their views on the purpose of the study and the data collected, I was able to reflect more critically on matters that seemed to be fairly obvious.

For example, at several stages, and more especially towards the conclusion of the fieldwork, I tried to elicit comments from as many participants as possible, mainly on the suitability of the sample, the participants' reactions to being chosen to take part in the study, and what they hoped would emerge from the study. In addition, I also recorded the many questions which these people asked me of their own accord; in particular, several which focussed on my role as researcher.

1. COMMENTS ABOUT THE SAMPLE

The students' and the teachers' comments about the friendship groups that were chosen for study gave some indications about the accuracy of the sampling procedure used. These groups were

chosen on the understanding that the members were close friends. However, there was no guarantee that this closeness would be maintained during the next four years while the study was in progress. Therefore, it was important to get some feedback from the students themselves to ascertain whether, at the end of the study, they felt strongly committed to the groups in which they were originally placed.

Several school-leavers, as well as students from the tertiary education group, felt a deep sense of belonging, for as long as they were associated with other members of the group during their stay in school. However, once they had left school that feeling was not so strong. A few students even expressed doubts about whether they could claim to be permanent members of their groups.

Thus, the composition of the groups was not as stable as was at first thought. Though there was still a fair amount of stability, it was not unusual to find that some of these students also joined other closely-knit groups, especially in their own neighbourhood. Though this aspect was not investigated in any great depth, the influence of these other groups on the students' perceptions should not be overlooked. The following extracts illustrate this:

Saras (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) : "We normally spoke to each other. It was a daily thing. But I wouldn't say we were a very strong group. It's just that we were in the same class. Suraya, Shireen and myself were close, but Champa was not so close. She had friends in the other class, and was with them for most of the time."

Nesan (practical grade, Orchard Lane) : "At school we were a group, but when we left school I don't think we really got into contact with each other. In school we were a strong group."

A few students from the tertiary education group also commented on the composition of their groups. For example, Selvi from Ridgemount indicated why she did not include some of her best friends in the group which she had to choose. Ashok from Orchard Lane was another who commented on this aspect.

Selvi : "The only reason why I chose Rajen is because he used to sit with us. Patty, Kasturi and some others were my good friends. If I chose one of them, and left out the others it would have been unfair. Praba and I were the best of friends. Rajen became our friend. We really started a good friendship through that I think."

Ashok : "Yes, we were a group. But as time went on, we had other interests. Boys like Juggie wanted to have a good time, while Devan, and myself wanted to further our studies. So the group changed a bit."

Generally, most teachers felt that the students who were chosen to be studied reflected a wide range of abilities. The range can be gauged from the comments of the following teachers.

Standard ten, ordinary grade, guidance teacher (Ridgemount):

"You seem to have a range from the very good ones to the not so good ones, to a couple in the middle. You seem to have the extremities and some people in the middle. In that respect, they are representative of the rest of the class."

Standard eight, practical grade, guidance teacher (Orchard Lane):

"As far as the particular students you have chosen, you have made a very good job of it. I think you have a very representative sample. You have taken a real cross section. And I think it's going to be a very valid research."

## 2. REACTIONS TO THE STUDY

Some of the students and teachers expressed their views about the study in general, and also stated what they felt about my presence in their classrooms. They gave me the impression that they were not put off by my presence, and that they looked forward to discussing with me their experiences and their future plans. This made me feel confident that I had secured their co-operation and that they were not participating in the study unwillingly.

Several students said that even though they did not understand fully what the study was about, they had no objections to taking part. Generally, they felt that the present study would benefit students of the future, especially those who were likely to seek employment soon after leaving school. It was important for them to know about the experiences of others who were in

a similar predicament. At first some students were afraid to speak to me, but as soon as they had got used to me, and realised what the study was about, they participated freely. The following extracts reveal some of these reactions of the students.

Perumal (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) : "At first I didn't know what the study was about. I thought it was nice to see what it was like. At first I was scared to talk, but now I'm getting used to it. You were talking freely, and I got used to talking freely too. That's how I got used to this study, and we both got on well. This fear is gone away, and we are like friends now."

David (practical grade, Ridgemount) : "I was prepared to take part in this study. I really didn't know what it was about until you told us. But I'm glad to share my views and my feelings because maybe someone else can learn and improve. If it's not shared, nothing can be done. We trusted you so we felt free to talk to you."

Ruben (practical grade, Ridgemount) : "I was very happy to be part of this study. You were like an ordinary teacher who came and talked to us. I'm sorry that the study has now come to an end. I guess that the job I've got might not be to your liking. I'm happy that you are keeping this information to yourself. You assured me so many times that it is confidential. I believe you. I have no fears."

There were also some students who stated that they found the study interesting, and that they had benefitted from talking to me about their future careers, their problems in school, and so on. They also felt secure in the knowledge that I had promised to keep their accounts confidential. In particular the practical grade students appreciated the fact that I was interested in their progress at school, and in their career preferences. They were also pleased to be included in the sample, since they felt that a study of this kind usually focussed on ordinary grade students only. The views of the following students illustrate some of these viewpoints.

Suraya (ordinary grade, Orchard Lane) : "At first I thought I wouldn't be able to speak freely, but then you told us that whatever we say is all confidential, and then I felt I could speak to you more freely. Now after three and half years I feel that the study is quite interesting. It also makes us aware that we will have to decide on a career. If it was not for the research, I may not have thought about my career from the beginning of standard eight."



Saras : "I felt that this study was interesting because we were having problems in choosing a career, and every teacher told us to choose from standard eight onwards. So I felt that by being in this study I could gain more information and feel more confident about making a choice. I had no fears really because I got used to you. I felt free to talk to you, and this study has been very helpful and worthwhile."

Mayadevi (practical grade, Orchard Lane) : "I felt that someone was really concerned about me. At first I thought that probably my education is too low, and may be I'm not good in some subjects, and you wanted to find out why I'm weak. It was only afterwards that I realised you are doing a research on us. I felt really happy that someone was studying us. Usually, people do research on the ordinary grade students, and we are left out."

Savy (practical grade, Orchard Lane) : "Firstly I wanted to know what this study was all about, and then I came to know. I felt quite happy that someone was taking care of us, and wants to know what our aims are, our plans for further studies, and so on. I wasn't afraid to talk. Once you know each other, there's nothing to fear. It was exciting. We always shared our problems with you. I enjoyed talking to you about this."

As with some students, there were teachers who felt uneasy when I visited them, but they soon became accustomed to me. I received their full co-operation, as can be seen from these comments.

Standard ten, practical grade, accountancy teacher (Ridgemount):

"Initially, I used to feel a bit uneasy because I'm not really used to people sitting in and listening. When somebody is sitting, you become conscious of what he is saying. You try to say things more correctly, and you try to become a bit more serious. But after I got talking to you I got more relaxed. I felt happy talking you about my students because I felt if this could benefit someone else, then it should be done."

Standard ten, ordinary grade, physical science teacher (Ridgemount):

"At the beginning I was a bit nervous with your presence, but as I got used to knowing you as a person, I took you as one of my friends. It didn't affect my lessons at all. We hope to learn something from your research."

Standard nine, practical grade, guidance teacher (Ridgemount):

"The very first day I was taken aback. I didn't feel at ease. But subsequent to that, because of our discussions, I found that you and I were almost on the same wavelength. I found that you were more interested in the social aspects, and its influence on the child's education. Therefore, I felt we had more in common. So I didn't see you as an outsider, but someone with similar interests."

Most teachers were not at all disturbed by my visits. Being already used to inspectors, principals and heads of departments visiting their classrooms, they were prepared to accept me. They also felt that since a study of this kind would be of benefit to other school-leavers, and the community in general, it was important for them to co-operate fully. This can be seen, for example, in the views of the following teachers.

Standard ten, ordinary grade, mathematics teacher (Ridgemount):

"You have sat in my lesson once. I've never feared an inspector or any other visitor to my class. My teaching is normal. If an inspector walks into my class I have no worries, so your being in my class made no difference. We were there to help you, but at the same time we were helping ourselves by getting some feedback from you about the pupils. So I felt quite at home when you interviewed me. If somebody is interested in the welfare of the pupils, then I think we should impart whatever knowledge we have to that person."

Standard ten, practical grade, geography teacher (Orchard Lane):

"Your presence didn't really have any effect on me. Over the years I've become used to inspectors, university lecturers, and the principal coming to my class. Though you were not there to assess my lessons, the presence of someone else in the class tends to sharpen up to a certain extent, or to motivate you. It wasn't intrusion in any way."

The principals of both schools gave their full support and also expressed similar views.

Principal (Ridgemount) : "At first I was a little concerned to see the extent to which classroom work will be affected. Since you were only involved in observations and recordings, I was pleased that it did not interfere in any way with normal work. When it came to interviewing the students we felt it more of an advantage than a disadvantage."



You were looking at certain aspects which we probably didn't look out for. With the guidance counsellor, on the one hand, and the researcher on the other, this particular operation did not inconvenience us in any way. I was also pleased that the researcher did not make any inroads on teachers' time by getting them to mark some sort of questionnaire or test which he conducted, or asking students to fill in questionnaires. I am also pleased that you interviewed me and the staff. If there are any shortcomings in this school, we like to know what these are."

Principal (Orchard Lane): "I felt nice that you were carrying out a research from which Indian education is going to benefit. You didn't upset the running of the school because you went about your work very quietly. You were merely an observer and you interviewed teachers and pupils. By your interviewing the teachers on certain aspects, you made them aware of certain things. I also didn't mind your questioning me on the policy of the school etc. I felt that this was an important part of the research."

There were some teachers who felt that my presence in their classrooms helped them to look critically at their own teaching. The views of two such teachers are quoted.

Standard ten, ordinary grade, English teacher (Orchard Lane):

"I enjoyed your presence simply because it also helped to build a lot of confidence in me. Normally, you find that when you are just with your pupils, you take it for granted that you tend to know everything, or sometimes you don't even prepare well. Then, when someone else is in your class, you are guarded in what you say, and you think about how well you are going to put across ideas and so on. This helps the teacher. So I appreciate the presence of someone else in my class. Now and again, I asked you for your opinions about my lessons. I also did not mind your interviewing me. After all, the information you are getting will be pooled back into the school. That's going to help not only the pupils of the future but the teachers also. And it's all being done for the improvement of education."

Standard ten, ordinary grade, counsellor (Ridgemount):

"You were a lecturer at the college of education when I was a student there. I couldn't divorce you from that situation. So I was quite happy when you sat and observed me during this research study. I welcomed it because it gave me an opportunity to teach with somebody else around. That put me in good stead when my lecturers from

the university came over to assess my practical work for the Diploma in School Guidance for which I am presently studying. It also prepares me for the visits by the school inspectors. I can say without fear that it was not discomfiting to have you around."

By contrast, there were at least two teachers who felt that my presence did have some adverse effects on their teaching, as well as on their pupils. This can be seen from their remarks.

Standard ten, practical grade, mathematics teacher (Orchard Lane):

"If you were not in my class I could have covered more work. Since you were around, I always wanted to get my pupils involved in the lessons. But I did not feel uncomfortable with your presence. I'm happy that you are enquiring about my students. I also heard that you visited the students' homes and got to know about the family background, which is very good. If this kind of information is made available to us we will know how to handle these students."

Standard ten, ordinary grade, counsellor (Orchard Lane):

"There were times when your presence did obstruct. The child knows that you are tape-recording. The tape recorder does interfere because the child feels that he has to be prepared to put on a show for you. I also felt affected. If you were not around when I did individual counselling, I may have touched on other things in the child's life. These were too personal and confidential to discuss when someone else is around."

### 3. PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE REPORT

The students, as well as their teachers, felt that if this study was to have any value, the written report should highlight certain matters which both the education authority and employers should take note of. For example, several teachers felt that the shortcomings of the differentiated system of education should be exposed, in the hope that the implications of this system for the career destinies of the students would be brought to the attention of policy makers. They felt that they could not discuss such matters with officials of the education department because of "bureaucratic control." It was hoped that the findings of this study would direct the attention of the authorities to this aspect of the organisation of schooling. Some teachers who expressed such views were:

Standard eight, practical grade, guidance teacher (Orchard Lane):

"We originally had 'advanced' and 'ordinary' grades; then there was 'ordinary' and 'practical.' Now we've got the 'ordinary', 'standard' and 'lower' grades. We have exposed our children to too rapid changes. Your report should attempt to give the officials in the Education Department, who are in charge of planning an insight into directions of courses, the effects of streaming, and the need for a common course of study. I feel that though there should be different courses, all subjects should be written on the same grade, that is, the higher grade."

Standard ten, practical grade, accountancy teacher (Ridgemount):

"I'm looking forward to some improvement in this whole system of education as far as the practical grade students are concerned. Besides just changing the name from practical to lower grade, there should be some other positive changes. If we really want these people to fit into the job market as such, then we should be doing something that is going to get them there. At this stage, we should be looking for the types of jobs that we can fit these people into."

Standard nine, practical grade, guidance teacher (Ridgemount):

"I would like your report to focus on the merits and demerits of the practical grade, and how the child's life can be improved in that particular grade. These pupils are in a pitiable plight. None of us have the power to speak directly to the educational authorities because of bureaucratic control. A research should be effective because it is done by an authority. It is done on a scientific basis, and therefore we should value the results that come out of research studies. Your study should come up with some startling revelations, but I wonder if the authorities will ever look at it because it might be a bit too much for them to take."

Some teachers also expressed the wish that the report might shed more light on the home background of the students; especially as teachers do not have enough time to visit their students' homes. It was crucial to know as much as they could about home background and related factors so that the school could cater for the needs of students from a variety of backgrounds. Some of these expectations were voiced by these teachers.

Standard ten, ordinary grade, mathematics teacher (Ridgemount):

"You have made home visits to see whether the environment is having an effect on these pupils."

This kind of study should be extremely beneficial. Most teachers do not know much about the background of their pupils. From a study like this, we should learn something about adjusting to the child."

Standard ten, ordinary grade, physical science teacher (Ridgemount):

"We have some problem children in our school, and I think you have got all types in your research programme, including such children. Most teachers do not understand such children. We need to know more about their background. We assume that all children come from similar backgrounds. Perhaps this study should highlight this aspect."

Some teachers hoped that this study would throw more light on factors influencing a student's choice of career. They also felt that the career-counselling programmes in schools were not satisfactory, and expressed the wish that the present study would stress the importance of career-counselling in schools. This can be seen from the following views:

Standard ten, ordinary grade, guidance counsellor (Orchard Lane):

"Perhaps your study should tell us what influences career decision-making amongst our students. There are some factors which operate uniquely in our community, and are not so relevant to other communities. For example, what amount of importance can one attach to parental influence, as against the student's own wishes? I would also like to know something about the career expectations of our girls. Also, we need some clarity on the factors that impose certain limitations on the students' career aspirations. What are some of the things which affect their search for employment?"

Standard ten, ordinary grade, English teacher (Orchard Lane):

"I hope that this study will enable some students to see their futures in a realistic sense. Most of them are living in a dream world. If we can help them to see their future in such a way, that might help a great deal. Take Perumal and Jaylal, for instance, they really need help to get them to think seriously about a career."

Standard ten, practical grade, guidance teacher (Ridgemount):

"We need a more constructive guidance programme. Those handling this subject should be carefully selected. Qualified persons should be used, and the subject should be treated more seriously. At present it's treated too lightly. I hope that your research does bring this out. Proper guidance should be given to all children, irrespective of their intellectual level, academic ability, whether they are in the lower or higher grade, and so on."



Several of the school-leavers suggested that the report should make future employers aware of the problems experienced by school-leavers in their search for work, and the adjustments which these youngsters had to make, once they had found employment. For example, Champa from the ordinary grade in Orchard Lane said:

"Employers should not be impatient with those of us who have just left school. They should wait for us to adjust. Some people can adjust easily. I was lucky to have considerate people where I worked. People who find it difficult to adjust quickly need such considerate people."

#### 4. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS ABOUT THE STUDY

The interest shown by the students, teachers, parents and employers has been reflected through the various questions asked, comments made, and suggestions offered. All of which indicates what these people understood about the purpose of the study, and what they hoped to get out of it. Their discussions with me, and their behaviour in my presence might well have been influenced by these perceptions.

Several students asked me for my opinion about their performances in school and the careers which they wished to pursue. They also wanted me to compare them with students from the other grade, and students from the other school. The following extracts are some examples of the interest shown by practical grade school-leavers.

Pat (practical grade, Ridgemount) : "In how many schools did you carry out this study? Did you observe ordinary grade pupils as well? What do they feel about practical grade students?"

Ruben : "What are your feelings about our class? Which other classes are you studying? What differences did you find between practical and ordinary grade students?"

Even though, at the outset, I took time to explain in sufficient detail the reasons why they were chosen to participate in this study, a few students were still anxious to know whether they had been chosen because they had "performed poorly," had "done something wrong," or were "in need of special treatment."

I had to assure them that none of these reasons applied. This anxiety can be seen in the comments made by these two students from the tertiary education group.

Mohan (Orchard Lane) : "I was fearful at first because I didn't know what the study was all about, and why I was chosen. But I soon got to know what it was about from the other students."

Ahmed (Ridgemount) : "Someone may mistake a researcher for being a psychologist or a psychiatrist. It looks as if you were trying to reform the pupils by selecting them for study. Though I never felt this way, perhaps one or two students may have felt odd when you kept observing them, and held discussions with them. Other students in the class may have also wondered why you were concentrating on just a few of us."

It should also be noted that despite the interest and awareness of many students, a few were not clear about the purpose of this study. These few students frequently asked me to tell them "more about the study."

On the other hand, the teachers voiced their opinions about several aspects of the study. Some asked about its design, the composition of the sample, and so on. This can be seen from some of their remarks.

Standard ten, practical grade, history teacher (Orchard Lane):

"I notice that you are not using the standard statistical approach, but you are studying the dynamic behaviour of human beings through actual observation. Your research may not get the same results if you were to apply it to a similar situation next year with another group of students. This kind of research is interesting because human beings are like the weather sometimes. If we expect to get a very clinical or scientific finding each time, without allowing for variance especially when it comes to human behaviour, then we are working on the wrong premise. In a science laboratory you will definitely get a particular solution if you use the basic formula each time. But in lessons in classroom settings, the situations very often change."

Standard ten, practical grade, English teacher (Ridgemount):

"What are your feelings about our pupils generally? After you have completed this research, how is it going to filter into the Education Department?"



Standard ten, ordinary grade, accountancy teacher (Orchard Lane) :

"Will your research have any effect on future planning, and the involvement of teachers in this? Teachers should be consulted when there are changes in the syllabus, and other matters related to the curriculum. There should be more involvement by teachers. At present, it is very limited."

As with the students, there were also a few teachers who, despite their keen interest in the study, were not quite sure what is entailed. This can be judged from some of the questions that they asked.

Standard ten, practical grade, biology teacher (Orchard Lane) :

"What is your study exactly about? What are you studying? I'm not sure about it."

Standard nine, ordinary grade, guidance teacher (Orchard Lane) :

"I'm not quite sure what your study is about. Can you please elaborate!"

Standard ten, practical grade, metalwork teacher (Ridgemount) :

"I don't know what this study is about. Therefore I'm not in a position to comment about the value of this study. Tell me more about it."

The parents, too, were keen to know more about the study. Some wanted to know whether I had undertaken this study because I was "writing a book or a thesis." I had to explain that while I was undertaking post-graduate studies, this project was really intended to find out more about the students' career aspirations, their experiences of schooling, and their search for work. Each time I had to answer such questions, it gave me the opportunity to look in a new way at the things which had happened to the school-leavers in question.

Parents from the tertiary education group were especially eager to have my opinion and advice about their children's progress in school, about the careers which they had in mind for them, and possible tertiary educational directions. The questions which these parents asked me illustrate some of these concerns.

Rajen's father (Ridgemount) : "What would you recommend for my son? In case he does not become an applicable student, if I happened to call on you, will you be able to give me some sort of advice?"

Mary's father (Ridgemount) : "How should I direct my daughter's goals? Is there any suggestion that I can get from you concerning her future education and career direction? After all you got to know her well by studying her for so long."

Like some of the students and teachers, there were also parents who were unaware of the purpose of the study, wanting me to tell them more about it. Some examples of such questions were these:

Mayadevi's father : "What is this study about? Why are you doing it, and what do you hope to achieve by it?"

Siva's father (tertiary education group, Orchard Lane) :

"What is this research about? What are you really trying to find out, and how will my son benefit?"

At least three of the employers commented on my role as researcher, and on the function of the school in relation to the needs of their particular industries. The comments enabled me to look closely at my own role, and the extent to which I may have affected their perceptions. The remarks of these employers are quoted.

Lennie's manager (practical grade, Orchard Lane) : "After your observations, you should advise students in school what to take up in the clothing industry. Many Indians are employed in clothing, and I think it is important for them to know what to expect. They can be employed in various departments."

Sagren's manager (ordinary grade, Ridgemount) : "Career-guidance people in schools should be in contact with industry all the time. Schools should get to know about our requirements when we select school-leavers. Most guidance counsellors have never worked in industries, so they don't know the requirements. What have they basically done in their lives, except go to varsity and qualify as career-guidance people? I don't know whether you have worked in industry. You've been a student, and then you studied further to become a lecturer. Although you're training people for something in life, you've personally never done what you've been training them for. So you've got to go into industry to find out."

Sheila's sales director (practical grade, Ridgemount) :

"Schools should train their workseekers on how to present themselves in interview situations. They should offer a basic course in communication, relative, for example, on how to handle telephone conversations. Sheila is on the telephone for much of the time, taking orders for items of clothing etc. They can also provide a basic commercial background, explaining to their students the mechanics of the commercial world. If they are equipped with this, some people should last a lot longer than they do at present in such jobs. We've had some people here, who initially looked very good. But as soon as the pressure was on, because they didn't have the background, they came apart suddenly. Small groups of students can be taken on visits to various places of work to actually observe the working environment."

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